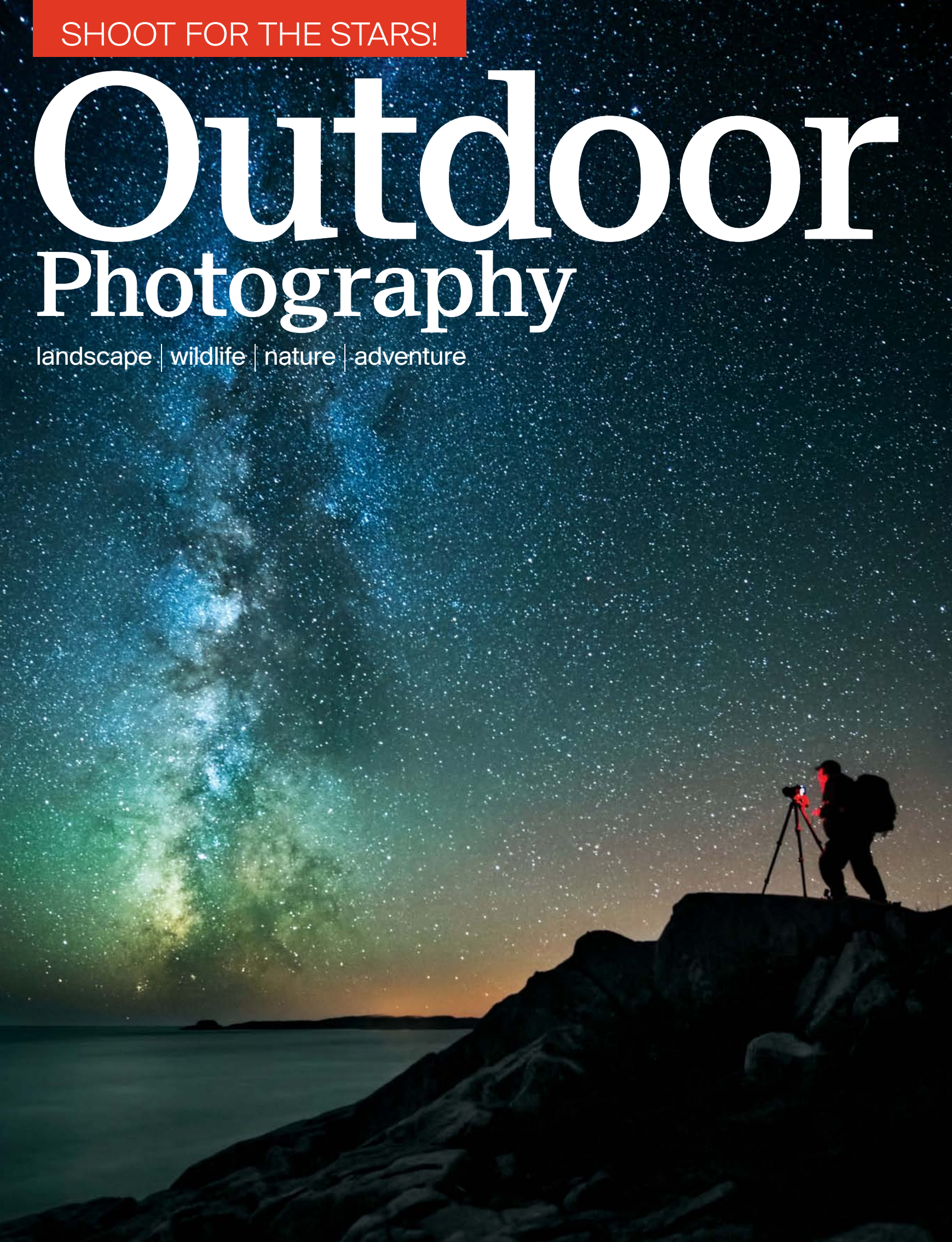


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Outdoor Photography

landscape | wildlife | nature | adventure



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At the heart of the image



EDITOR'S LETTER

MOMENT TO SHINE

How do you fancy heading off to the Arctic in spring 2015 on the adventure of a lifetime? That's the amazing prize awaiting the overall winner of this year's Outdoor Photographer of the Year competition (*see page 36 or go to opoty.co.uk for more details*).

Back in April this year, I was fortunate enough to go on the Fjällräven Polar 2014 expedition, and it was an experience that I and the 20 participants from around the globe will never forget. It was hard to imagine that we could get on a plane to Norway with little more than hand luggage (and camera equipment for my sins) and then be heading off into the Arctic wilderness for four days.

Over the course of the 300km adventure, dog sledding from Signaldalen in Norway to Jukkasjärvi in Sweden, through what is possibly the most impressive wilderness region in Europe, the participants learnt how to effectively use the winter outdoor equipment supplied by Fjällräven.

They also realised the importance of every word spoken during the skills sessions by survival expert and

Fjällräven head gear tester Johan Skullman. Our diverse group became living proof that the right equipment and knowledge can allow just about anyone from any walk of life to venture into the wildest places in the most inhospitable conditions, and not only survive but absolutely thrive.

Despite hardly anyone on the trip having much prior experience of these sorts of conditions or activities, I don't think there was a single participant who wouldn't have wanted another week or more bolted on to the trip when we got to the finish line.

The best thing about this prize, of course, is that it is something that money can't buy. You can either win Outdoor Photographer of the Year 2014 or you can enter the separate Fjällräven Polar competition directly to attempt to secure a spot. Either way, if you happen to be among the chosen ones, there is no risk of your friends and family retorting 'Oh, I did that too,' when you regale them with your epic Arctic stories.

Steve Watkins



GET IN TOUCH

EMAIL Contact the Editor, Steve Watkins, at steve@thegmcgroup.com or Deputy Editor, Claire Blow, at claire.blow@thegmcgroup.com

WRITE TO US Outdoor Photography, 86 High Street, Lewes, East Sussex BN7 1XN



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COVER IMAGE



Mike Taylor, from central Maine in the USA, took this stunning image of the Milky Way on the Bold Coast. Find out more about how to shoot astrophotography landscapes in our technique article on page 28.

THE ISSUE at a glance



IN CONVERSATION WITH
Neil Aldridge

W Neil Aldridge talks about the power of conservation photography – page 16



How to shoot
astrophotography landscapes

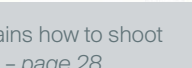
WORKING IN THE DARK



CAPTURING THE NIGHT



How to shoot
astro landscapes



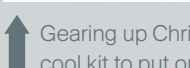
WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER
OF THE YEAR 2014



Wildlife Photographer of the Year:
see the winners! – page 64



GEARING UP
THE LANDSCAPE PHOTOGRAPHER



Gearing up Christmas special – really cool kit to put on your list – page 84

SHOOTING STARS MASTER YOUR NIGHT-TIME PHOTOGRAPHY SKILLS

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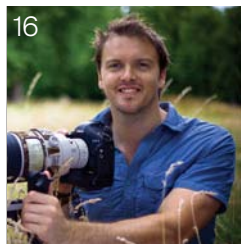
Correctly identify the location and you could win a pair of Keen Revel II boots, worth £135!

NEXT ISSUE

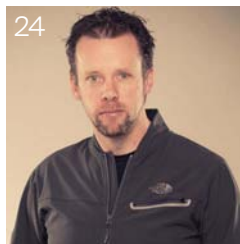
on sale 18 December 2014

- » How to shoot winter landscapes
- » Luke Massey's stunning leopard photos
- » Quick guide to photographing crepuscular rays
- » *Melting Away*: a new book on the polar regions

IN THE MAGAZINE THIS MONTH...



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Neil Aldridge is a photojournalist renowned for his documentary work highlighting conservation issues and endangered wildlife. He leads photo tours and raises awareness and funds for conservation through sales of his books. conservationphotojournalism.com



24
Norman McCloskey has been photographing the Irish landscape for over 20 years and is passionate about working in the surroundings he has a deep connection with. He has been known to travel further afield to colder climates, and in 2008 spent three weeks in Antarctica. normanmccloskey.com



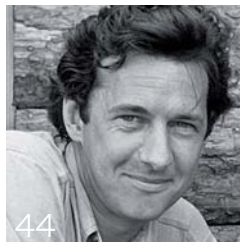
28
Dan Santillo is a professional photographer based in the Swansea Valley in South Wales. He specialises in landscape photography of the Gower Peninsula and the Brecon Beacons, and has a particular interest in astrophotography. dansantillo.com



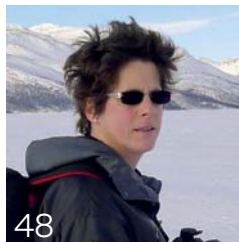
34
Over the last 20 years, **Lee Frost** has become one of the UK's leading landscape and travel photographers and one of the world's bestselling photography authors. He also leads sell-out photo workshops and tours. leefrost.co.uk



41
Daniel Hannabuss is a Kent-based photographer spending most of his time chasing coastlines and landscapes. It's a personal fixation with a constant focus on enjoying the moment as much as capturing it. dhphotography.org.uk



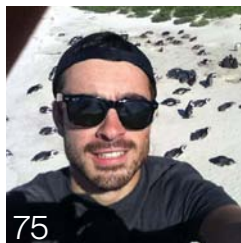
44
Paul Harris trained as a photojournalist. He is passionate about storytelling through his travel, adventure and documentary imagery; balancing the road less travelled with the spirit of the land and its peoples. Paul is a sought after tutor, and leads photo tours for Wild Photography Holidays. paulharrisphotography.com



48
Lizzie Shepherd is a professional photographer based in North Yorkshire, specialising in landscape and travel imagery. She provides tuition on a one-to-one basis as well as leading group workshops. She is currently co-leading photo workshops in the UK and Europe for Tripod Travels. lizzieshepherd.com



51
Sean Lewis is a freelance landscape photographer based in West Sussex. Passionate about the outdoors, his photography takes him all over the country as well as abroad and he is regularly commissioned for brochure work in the tourism industry. seanlewisphotography.co.uk



75
Luke Massey is a 23-year-old wildlife photographer and cameraman. His wildlife obsession started long before he picked up a camera, keeping a menagerie of both native and foreign animals in his bedroom. When he was 12 he picked up his first DSLR and has never looked back. lmasseyimages.com



76
Steve Young has been at *OP* from issue one and has also written two bird photography books for GMC. His images have appeared in journals, magazines and books, and he was photo editor of two bird identification guides. He was the overall winner in the 2010 BWPA competition. birdsonfilm.com



79
Dominic Hames is a photographer's accessory, often strategically placed by his wife to significantly improve the aesthetics of her photographs. He rarely takes photographs himself, preferring to observe the scene and the antics of others as they strive for their perfect shot.



90
Andy Luck is an award-winning wildlife short programme producer, and also an environmental photojournalist with a passion for cameras and photography. His work has been widely published, and he is a regular contributor to *OP*. wildopeneye.com

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

Mike Taylor miketaylorphoto.com, **Richard Slater** richardslaterphotography.com, **John Potter** jpotter-landscape-photographer.com, **James Grant** jamesgrantphotography.co.uk, **Drew Buckley** drewbuckleyphotography.com, **David Chapman** davidchapman.org.uk, **David Kirkpatrick** craigrobertsphotography.co.uk, **Andy Hough** andyhoughphotography.com, **Izabela Janusz**, **Laurie Campbell** lauriecampbell.com, **Steve Young** birdsonfilm.com, **Nick Smith** nicksmithphoto.com

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The expedition takes place 200 kilometres north of the *Arctic Circle*, over a mountain chain and across *Europe's* largest area of permafrost.



THIS COULD BE YOU

Time to apply to Fjällräven Polar

IN APRIL 2015 20 new participants will have the opportunity to steer their team of dogs across mountains and tundra, spend their nights outside and learn about living outdoors in the winter. Apply today and you may be one of those who get to experience one of *Europe's* last wildernesses together with us.

A unique winter adventure

Our aim with *Fjällräven Polar* is to demonstrate that outdoor life in the winter can be both safe and comfortable. With the right equipment and the right preparations, you can learn to cope

with severe cold – perhaps even appreciate it. After all, the countryside is rarely as wonderful as when it is really cold.

During your expedition, *Fjällräven's* outdoor experts will be on hand at all times to guide you and share their knowledge.

Apply here

Apply on *Fjällräven's* website between the 18th November and the 12th December. There you need to upload a film and state your reasons in order to convince your friends and us about why you should be the one standing on the starting

line in *Signal dalen*. Half of the participants will be appointed through a public vote, while half will be hand-picked by us at *Fjällräven*.

If you are selected, you can expect the greatest winter adventure of your life – four days in a unique environment, far north of the *Arctic Circle*.



Read more and apply at
www.fjallraven.co.uk

Old bog road

by Peter Gordon

The old bog road in Connemara, Ireland, has along it a rugged mix of marsh, lakes and beautiful mountain backdrops.

On this particular day, the rain was torrential at dawn and I was holed up in my car, hoping for the best. It was either going to go really wrong or really right.

Fortunately, the clouds opened for a brief moment, the wind dropped and this wonderful fleeting moment of light passed before me.

The moral of the story: don't go home; sit it out. If you do, you can be sure that breakfast, when you finally get to it, will taste even better.

Nikon D800e with 17-35mm f/2.8 lens at 17mm, ISO 100, 1/60sec at f/11, Lee ND grad 0.6 hard





NEWSROOM

CONSERVATION

NEW LAUNCHES

COMPETITIONS

OUTDOORS

TECHNOLOGY

OTHER NEWS



© Mark Bulmer/Shutterstock

Scott expedition photographer's notebook discovered in Antarctica

A photographer's notebook dating back to Captain Scott's last expedition, over a century ago, has been discovered in Antarctica. It belonged to expedition member George Murray Levick (1876-1956) and contains his pencil notes detailing the date, subjects and exposure details for the photographs he took during Scott's ill-fated 1910-1913 journey to the South Pole.

The notebook, entitled 'Wellcome Photographic Exposure Record and Diary 1910', was found outside Scott's Terra Nova Base at Cape Evans by conservation specialists from New Zealand's Antarctic Heritage Trust. Summer snowmelt had exposed the notebook for the first time in more than 100 years.

Nigel Watson, Antarctic Heritage Trust's Executive Director said: 'It's an exciting find. The notebook is a missing part of the official expedition record. After spending seven years conserving Scott's last expedition building and collection, we are delighted to still be finding new artefacts.'

The notebook has been restored and conserved by the trust in New Zealand, and is now back at Scott's Cape Evans base, which contains 11,000 artefacts left in Antarctica by the explorers.

To find out more about the Antarctic Heritage Trust's conservation work in Antarctica, visit: nzaht.org.



© Antarctic Heritage Trust (NZ)

Geological Society names UK's top 100 geosites

The Geological Society of London has put together a list of 100 of the best geological sites in Britain and Ireland. They were selected from over 400 sites nominated in a public vote. The geosites range from soaring sea cliffs, rocky outcrops, and mountain peaks to cathedrals, caves and islands. All of the sites can be visited by the public.

The list is divided into 10 categories, which include landscape, coastal, adventurous, and historical and scientific importance. The site that received the most nominations within each category takes pride of place as the People's Favourite.

Four out of the 10 category winners are Scottish sites, including Glencoe in the Highlands, which was voted the top fire and ice geosite. The island of Staffa in the Inner Hebrides was named the best adventurous geosite.

Professor Rob Butler, of the Geological Society, which ran the competition to mark Earth Science Week, said: 'The list highlights the huge range of incredible geology the UK and Ireland have to offer. From the Outer Hebrides to Cornwall, from rocks showing how the crust formed billions of years ago to young sediments pushed around by ice sheets a few thousand years ago, we are unique in having such a diverse geological heritage over a relatively small area.'

The 100 Great Geosites have been compiled into an online clickable map, making it easy to find places of geological interest near you. Sites that are particularly good for visitors are highlighted, as are those that offer stunning scenery. An 'unsung heroes' accolade is given to sites that have exceptional local geology. The website is packed with useful information and images, making it a valuable and inspiring resource for outdoor photographers.

Winners of the 10 categories

Landscape Assynt, Scottish Highlands

Industrial and Economic Importance

The Ironbridge Gorge, Shropshire

Historical and Scientific Importance

Siccar Point, Berwickshire

Educational The Rotunda Museum in Scarborough, Yorkshire

Adventurous Staffa, Inner Hebrides

Human Habitation Stonehenge, Wiltshire

Coastal Hunstanton Cliffs, Norfolk

Outcrops Craster, Northumberland

Folding and Faulting Millook Haven, Cornwall

Fire and Ice Glencoe, Scottish Highlands

See all the sites at: geolsoc.org.uk/100geosites

World wildlife populations halve in 40 years

Global wildlife populations have halved in just 40 years, according to a new report by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF). Numbers of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and fish have fallen by an average of 52%. Freshwater species have suffered a 76% decline, an average loss of almost double that of land and marine species.

The WWF's Living Planet Report 2014 shows that the biggest recorded threat to biodiversity comes from the combined impacts of habitat loss and degradation, driven by what the WWF calls unsustainable human consumption. It also notes that the consequences of climate change are an increasing concern.

The report uses the Living Planet Index, a database maintained by the Zoological Society of London (ZSL), which tracks over 10,000 vertebrate species populations from 1970 to 2010. While it shows a dramatic loss in biodiversity around the world, it also provides solutions for a healthy planet.

Professor Ken Norris, Director of Science at the ZSL said: 'The scale of biodiversity loss and damage to the very ecosystems that are essential to our existence is alarming. Although the report shows the situation is critical, there is still hope. Protecting nature needs focused conservation action, political will and support from businesses.' *Learn more and download the report at wwf.org.uk.*



Bengal tiger. Globally, habitat loss and hunting have reduced tigers from 100,000 a century ago to just 3,000. The WWF is determined to double the number of wild tigers by 2022 – the next Chinese year of the tiger.

© naturepl.com/Francois Savigny/WWF-Canon

US expands vast marine reserve in the Pacific

US President Barack Obama has signed a memorandum to create the largest marine reserve in the world, by expanding the existing Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument. The area comprises seven islands, atolls and reefs that lie between Hawaii and American Samoa. The waters surrounding the islands are home to a unique diversity of corals, fish, shellfish, marine mammals, seabirds, land birds, insects and vegetation, many of which are found nowhere else on Earth. Species include leatherback and loggerhead sea turtles, silky sharks, oceanic whitetip sharks, beaked whales, manta rays, sooty terns and red-tailed tropic birds.

Until now, the protected area encompassed an area of just 50

nautical miles. This has been expanded to 200 nautical miles from the islands' shores. It will cover 490,343 square miles – an area about three times the size of California. There will be a ban on commercial fishing, deep-sea mining and other activities that threaten the wildlife-rich waters. This will help to safeguard many threatened and endangered species, including hawksbill turtles, giant clams and coconut crabs.

Although the area is smaller than the 782,000 square miles that President Obama initially considered, the expansion has been welcomed by environmental groups, who hope the move will encourage other nations to take similar steps.

fpir.noaa.gov

NUMBER CRUNCH

490,000

photographs of Gombe Stream National Park, in Tanzania, have been captured for Google's latest Street View collection. It took nine days to map the 20-square-mile national park, where Jane Goodall carried out her pioneering chimpanzee research. Find out more at janegoodall.org.



© The Jane Goodall Institute

15

UK mountain regions have been brought together in a new British Mountain Maps Collection. Specially created for wilder areas, and available as apps, the maps offer clear, detailed mapping from aerial surveys, which have been tried and tested by the British Mountaineering Council. The collection costs £149.95, and maps can also be purchased separately. Until 31 December 2014 you can get 25% off both the BMM Collection and the individual maps; simply enter coupon code BMM25 at the checkout. Visit: shop.anquet.com/bmm-the-collection.

1,365

– the maximum focal length, in millimeters, of the Canon SX60 HS, the latest addition to its PowerShot bridge camera lineup. With a 65x optical zoom (21-1365mm equivalent) it is, at the time of writing, the biggest zoom range of any bridge camera on the market. It has a guide price of £449.99 and is available now. See what it can do at canon.co.uk.



9,064

marine species have been chronicled in the first Antarctic atlas since 1969. The *Biogeographical Atlas of the Southern Ocean* comprises 66 chapters and contains around 100 colour photographs and 800 maps. Species range from single-cell organisms to whales, penguins and seals. Read about the project at atlas.biodiversity.aq.



© Julian Gutt

370

– the speed, in miles per second, at which energised particles are emitted from the sun to create solar clouds. The 'flares' can appear as aurora borealis on Earth, but can have a disruptive influence on our planet. The Met Office has set up a dedicated forecast centre to learn more about them – see metoffice.gov.uk/space-weather.

OUT THERE

IN PRINT

Wild Life

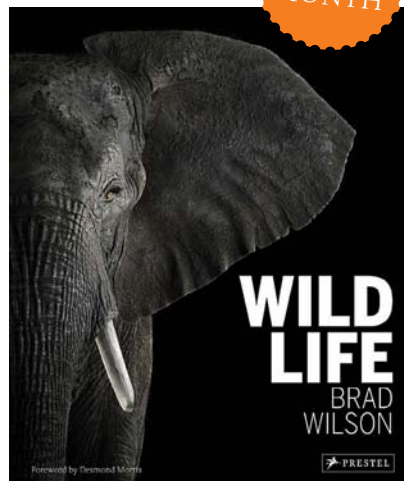
Brad Wilson

» Prestel Publishing

» 978-3-7913-4892-6

» £29.99, hardback

BOOK
OF THE
MONTH



Wildlife photography has become one of the best genres to try out the array of sophisticated gadgets rapidly appearing on the market. For photographer Brad Wilson, however, using robot cams and drones isn't how he gets closer to his wild subjects; instead he brings animals into his studio and depicts every crevice, bump and hair follicle of his subject without a zoom lens or remote control in sight.

With a background in photographing celebrities, Wilson uses his portraiture skills to put crocodiles, big cats and birds of prey at centre stage. With each creature set against a black backdrop, the 80 photographs are spectacular and yet, because of their hyperreal detail, they look unnatural at times. This isn't a book for purist wildlife photographers, as questions about the subjects' welfare may well be asked



Cheetah #3, Los Angeles, CA, 2011



Spectacled Owl #1, St Louis, MO, 2012

(despite reassurance from zoologist and author Desmond Morris in the foreword). This is, nonetheless, a thought-provoking set of pictures that helps widen the scope of the genre.

AROUND THE WORLD WITH EIGHT INSPIRING MEDIA

- 1 Ocean and Desert**
Renate Aller, Radius Books,
£46, hardcover

Series of oceanscapes combined with photos of sand dunes in New Mexico and Colorado.

- 2 Petrochemical America**
Richard Mistrach & Kate Orff,
Aperture, £25, paperback

The award-winning book with Mistrach's photographs of Louisiana's Chemical Corridor is now available in a smaller, paperback edition.

- 3 Thony Belizaire, Witness to History: 100 photographs of the struggle for democracy in Haiti and Burma, 1852-1860**
Thony Belizaire and Raoul Peck, Seven Stories Press, £25, hardcover

Comprising the late Haitian photojournalist's most moving photos.

- 4 Corcovado National Park: Chile's wilderness jewel**
Antonio Vizcaino, Goff books, £57.50, hardcover

Magnificent photographs depicting one of Earth's greatest wilderness areas.

- 5 Wainwright Record Attempt**
Posing Production, £19.99, DVD

DVD documenting Steve Birkinshaw's gripping attempt to break the record of completing all 214 Lakeland Wainwright fells in under seven days.

- 6 France, Michael Kenna**
Nazraeli Press, £55, casebound with slipcase

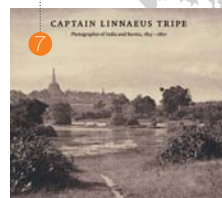
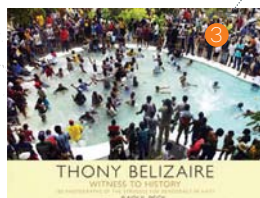
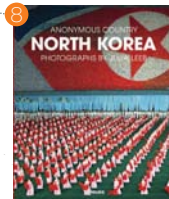
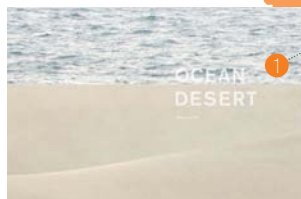
The latest monograph by this master black & white landscape photographer comprises 275 images made in France since the 1980s.

- 7 Captain Linnaeus Tripe, Photographer of India and Burma, 1852-1860**
Roger Taylor and Crispin Branfoot, Prestel Publishing, £40, hardcover

Classic landscape images by the 19th-century British photographer.

- 8 Anonymous Country: North Korea**
Julia Webb, teNeues, £65, hardcover

An insight into the country's architecture, culture and people; includes an app with 15 interactive features.



FIVE MINUTES WITH... TED LEEMING AND MORAG PATERSON

Anna Bonita Evans talks to husband and wife team Ted Leeming and Morag Paterson about their new fine art photo book, *Zero Footprint*.

ANNA BONITA EVANS All of the images in *Zero Footprint* are taken from one fixed location; your home in Galloway, south-west Scotland. How did the concept come about?

TED LEEMING & MORAG PATERSON We'd spent five years planning and building our low-carbon house, trying to use as many local or reclaimed materials as possible. We became utterly immersed in researching and planning the project, so it seemed a natural progression to explore what would happen if we applied some of the same principles to a photography project. That thought evolved into what we've spent the last five years working on: photographing the landscape from one fixed location that involved no travel, having a 'zero footprint'.

ABE Can you tell us a bit about how your creative partnership works?

TL&MP We both undertake pretty much all aspects of our photographic work without any rigid boundaries. For this project, that has meant whoever was there at the time took the photos. On days when we were both there, we took it in turns at the tripod, which was frustrating at times, of course – watches were tapped on a frequent basis to indicate changeover times. On a more general basis, we decided to joint sign most of our work, as it removed the competitive element and meant we could share and develop ideas much quicker than either of us would have done as individuals. It is now not so much about who takes the final image as the concept, process and journey towards arriving at the result.

ABE For every book sold you are planting a tree in the Zero Footprint location; can you tell us more about this?



TL&MP We've had this piece of land for about seven years now. When we first bought it, it had been grazed by sheep for a long time and was mainly grass and bracken with most of the other fauna nibbled down by livestock. Our aim is to let it revert to a more natural state; we're planting native trees, both for aesthetic and environmental reasons. Although the book is printed on FSC paper we decided to go a step further and plant a tree here for every copy, both as a carbon 'offset' and as a way of developing our hillside for both habitat and photography purposes.

ABE Joe Cornish wrote the foreword; how did this collaboration come about?

TL&MP The connection originally arose after Niall Bervie spotted an exhibition of Ted's work at the Scottish Nature Photography Fair and mentioned it to Joe who then got in touch. Over the years a friendship has developed, both with Joe's family and the gallery's staff – we've just had our third exhibition there. Joe's deep appreciation of landscape, photography and the environment, along with the fact that he's been to the location itself and has an understanding of the project and our motivations, made him the obvious choice. He very kindly obliged.

ABE The final seven images are very different to the others in the book; they're ethereal in appearance and focus on birdlife rather than



landscapes. How did this come about?

TL&MP The bird photos were as much a surprise to us as anyone. We'd been focusing on some trees when a wren flew into shot and that set us off on four days of continuously photographing our garden visitors. It's fairly typical of the open-minded way we work; by being open to ideas and opportunities you end up heading down a completely different route. It's not about being random, just about not being too rigid in your approach. We thought long and hard about including these shots, as they are so different from the landscape work. In the end, however, the project is partly about diversity and creativity within fixed parameters, and as such they have a valid place as part of the portfolio.

ABE In your text at the end of the book, you give the impression that you haven't closed the door to the project...

TL&MP There's so much to explore with respect to the Zero Footprint project: as the vegetation grows we'll have more opportunities for close-up work, there are wildlife ideas to follow up on, and living in a designated dark sky park, the night sky is an obvious choice. We're also close to finishing some video and time-lapse work, with sound recordings from the location. We're investigating having a permanent webcam feed – if our rural internet connection can cope. The idea is also going to become part of the Environmental Arts Festival Scotland for 2015, meaning other artists (working in any discipline) can get involved with their own Zero Footprint projects. And of course the weather constantly throws up new compositions.

Zero Footprint is on sale now

» Leeming and Paterson Publishing
» 978-0-9929-981-0-3
» £40, hardback

Zero Footprint is also available as an e-book, and costs £2.95. Both versions of the book can be purchased via Ted and Morag's website: leemingpaterson.com



THE BIG VIEW



EXHIBITIONS

1 From Cairo to Constantinople: Early photographs of the Middle East

» *The Queen's Gallery, Buckingham Palace, London*
» To 22 February 2015

Nowadays travelling to faraway places is not only something we're used to but is also an experience many of us expect to enjoy as a holiday. In the 1800s, overseas travel was of course a different matter; it was a huge undertaking, filled with unknown risks, and completed by only a few.

Imagine the response, then, when in 1862 British photographer Francis Bedford published the 172 images he took during a four-month tour (where he accompanied the future King Edward VII) across Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, Turkey and Greece. Still a relatively new medium, the photographs revealed historic monuments and arid Middle Eastern landscapes most people had only imagined or seen through drawings. Soon after the exhibition opened, the *British Journal of Photography* described the show as 'perhaps the most

important that has hitherto been placed before the public.'

Returning to the public eye more than 150 years after they were taken, the photographs are exhibited alongside archaeological material collected by the king during the tour. Although visitors will be more familiar with Bedford's landscapes this time round, they will surely still stir the same sense of awe. royalcollection.org.uk

2 We, The People

» *The Little Black Gallery, London*
» 2 to 16 December

The Little Black Gallery has teamed up with Survival International to showcase the 12 winning entries from the human rights organisation's first ever photo competition.

Giving insight into the unique ways indigenous people live around the world, the stunning selection of images includes

portraits of people from the Tarahumara, Mentawai and Willoq communities and captures their rituals and traditions.

Survival International was founded in 1969 following a *Sunday Times Magazine* article about the genocide of Brazilian Indians, which featured photos by acclaimed photographer Don McCullin. thelittleblackgallery.com

3 Arena: Photographers from the South

» *Sidcot Arts Centre, Somerset*
» To 13 December

Bringing together eight members of Arena, a group of prestigious photographers based in the south of England, this wonderful exhibition includes works by lith-printing landscape photographer Tim Rudman, Landscape Photographer of the Year 2011 finalist Susan Brown, and multi-award winning travel photographer John Chamberlin. With a varied mix of work, visitors can enjoy looking at a wide range of photographic genres. arenaphotographers.com



WINTER WILDLIFE EVENTS

Winter birds by boat

» Christchurch, Dorset
 » 7 December, and various dates until March 2015
 During the winter season the muddy sandbanks of Christchurch Harbour are the perfect feeding grounds for waders, ducks, geese, oystercatchers and wigeons. This two-hour cruise departs from Mudeford Quay and the boat is fully open to the elements, so take along a warm jacket as well as your camera kit. Tickets cost £12 (£10 for RSPB members) and booking is essential. Find full details at rspb.org.uk/discoverandenjoynature/seenature/events



Discover the wonderful birds of the Exe

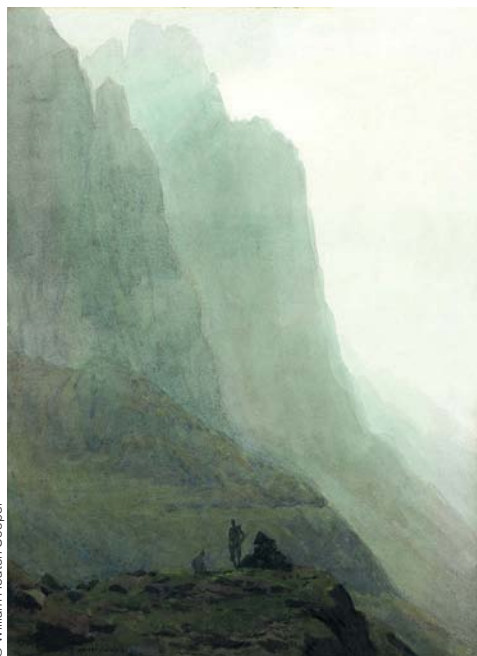
» Exe Estuary, Devon
 » 7 December
 This two-hour walk (from 9.30am -11.30am) is the perfect way to explore the birdlife living around the river Exe. Thousands of water birds, including black-tailed godwits and wigeons, migrate to the marshes for the winter season. A RSPB guide will be on hand to answer all your questions, leaving you inspired to explore the reserve alone and take photographs to your heart's content. Tickets cost £3 (free for RSPB members). Find full details at rspb.org.uk/discoverandenjoynature/seenature/events



© Andy Hay

THE BIGGER PICTURE

Seeing exhibitions you may not normally associate with your photography can lead to fresh ideas; here are two shows we feel are worth a visit...



© William Heaton Cooper

Line of Ascent

» Heaton Cooper Studio, Cumbria
 » To spring 2015
 Looking at artists' impressions of the landscape can teach you new things to enhance your own photographs of the outdoors. Taking place at William Heaton Cooper's gallery in Grasmere, the exhibition features his line drawings and paintings of Lakeland crags, produced for the Fell and Rock Climbing Club guides for 50 years from the 1930s onwards. The work reveals his technical excellence and his ability to portray the evocative power of the wilderness. An insight into mid-20th century climbing culture, the show also includes photographs by Heaton taken during expeditions as well as journals and sketchbooks he used when visiting Mount Blanc's Grandes Jorasses peaks. heatoncooper.co.uk

Modern War Gardens: Paradise lost

» Garden Museum, London
 » To 5 January 2015
 Taking her camera away from areas of direct combat, photojournalist Lalage Snow offers a different perspective on war. Looking at hidden gardens in Kabul, Gaza and Ukraine, and including in her photos the people who tend to the green spaces, Snow reveals what life is like for those living in the shadows of war and our need to have nature close by – wherever we may be and whatever the circumstances. gardenmuseum.org.uk



© Lalage Snow, Modern War Gardens

ADVENTURE TALKS

1 Higher Ground: Adventures of a mountain guide

» Bonar Hall, University of Dundee
 » 28 November
 Accountant turned mountaineer guide Martin Moran reads from his autobiography, *Higher Ground*, and shares a selection of his photographs, as part of the Dundee Mountain Film Festival (27-29 November). Tickets for the talk cost £12 and tickets for the three-day Dundee Mountain Film Festival cost £35. Find out more and book your tickets at dundeemountainfilm.org.uk

2 Against all Odds: Adventures in polar exploration

» University of Aberdeen
 » 1 December
 The only individual to have crossed Antarctica and the North Pole unassisted from coast to coast, explorer, writer and photographer Børge Ousland will recount some of his most thrilling adventures in this Royal Geographical Society talk. Tickets for non-RGS members cost £8. To book, call 01738 455050; to find out more visit rsgs.org/events



© Børge Ousland

3 Chris Bonington at 80

» Royal Geographical Society, London
 » 4 December
 Discussing his 60-year career in the mountains, Sir Chris Bonington speaks to Mountain Heritage Trust Chair Julie Summers. He'll also talk about his most recent climb. Tickets cost £25; find out more and book tickets at mountain-heritage.org



© Stuart Walker/Chris Bonington Picture Library

4 Rockall Solo

» The Station Hotel, Perth, Perthshire
 » 9 December
 In this RGS talk, Nick Hancock shares his experience of spending a record-breaking 45 days alone on Rockall – a remote islet located 286 miles off Scotland's west coast. Tickets for non-RGS members cost £8. To book, call 01738 455050; to find out more visit rsgs.org/events



© Nick Hancock

5 The Limbless Mountaineer

» Chemistry Theatre, University of Bristol
 » 10 December
 Jamie Andrew's story is one of the most gripping and inspiring you'll probably ever hear. Severe frostbite during a near fatal climbing trip left Jamie a quadruple amputee. In learning to walk again he has achieved some incredible feats, including completing iron-man triathlons and continuing with his passion: climbing mountains. Tickets cost £8; to book, visit wildernesslectures.com

6 Travels in India with Michael Wood

» Royal Geographical Society, London
 » 17 December
 Coinciding with the RGS photo exhibition, *Disappearing Railways*, historian and BBC broadcaster Michael Wood recalls his most memorable experiences while travelling through India. The talk is in aid of the Angus McDonald Trust – a charity dedicated to healthcare projects in remote south-east Asia. Tickets cost £20 (plus £1.85 booking fee). To book, visit eventbrite.com and search 'travels in India'. The exhibition, *Disappearing Railways*, runs from 1-23 December and 1-9 January 2015. Full details can be found at angusmcdonaldtrust.org

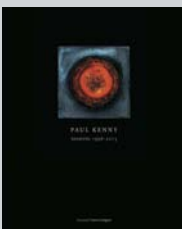
Your letters

Write to us! We love getting your views and responses; email claire.blow@thegmcgroup.com

December's letter of the month winner, James Hopkins, receives a £45 voucher from Triplekite Publishing to spend on a book of his choice.

Set up and run by David Breen and Dav Thomas, Triplekite Publishing produces high quality fine art landscape photography books, including Hans Strand's *Iceland: Above and Below*, Paul Kenny's *Seaworks*, Iain Sarjeant's *The Pool* and Dav Thomas' *With Trees*.

Find out more about Triplekite Publishing's collection of photo books at triplekite.co.uk



A new world of possibilities

I have had cameras and been playing around with taking images since I was a teenager. Eight years ago I received a DSLR as a wedding present. Since then I have been tinkering more with photography and have captured some lucky images, some may say. This year, for my birthday, I received an unexpected present: a one-day, one-to-one photography workshop. I wasn't sure how much I would get from the day, but it was booked and off I went.

The workshop began in Bracelet Bay, Swansea. The weather was okay, but not the best, and drizzle promptly arrived. We ran through some basics on the shore with the lighthouse behind and then headed to Mumbles Pier. After a short session the clouds really opened up, so we headed to a café near Pennard for a tutorial on composition. We then walked over to Three Cliffs Bay, took more photos and headed back to the café to process the images.

Well, I had a brilliant time! I didn't know I could learn so much in a day. I have completely changed my way of thinking around composition and spotting shots. I am now using the camera nearly entirely on manual and am much better able to tell the camera what I want it to do. I have been introduced to a whole new world of possibilities, with little hints and tips

throughout the day. We covered everything from camera settings right through to filters, HDR, and post-processing in Lightroom, with too much in between to list.

I have read photography books, and articles in *Outdoor Photography*, but being with an expert all day is by far the best. I will never be a professional photographer; I will stick to veterinary surgery for now, but I would strongly recommend a course like this to anyone who is vaguely interested. I can now achieve so much more!

James Hopkins, *Lampeter*

LETTER
OF THE
MONTH



James' panorama of Three Cliffs Bay, Swansea

More wildlife, please!

As an enthusiastic amateur wildlife and nature photographer, I was delighted to see, in the September issue (OP182), Andrew Parkinson's article, 'How to photograph wildlife behaviour', and an extended Nature Zone section. My message brings a request that future issues may include more coverage of wildlife and nature, including photographic advice, suggested locations, and high quality images.

For many photographers, the term 'outdoor photography' means wildlife and nature photography as much as landscape photography. There is a massive number of wildlife and nature photographers in Britain, both professionals and excellent amateurs, as is evident from the winners of competitions and from examples online. I should think it would not be difficult for *OP* to elicit articles from this pool of photographers, many of whom would be delighted to share their knowledge and showcase their portfolios.

Mike Russell, *via email*

Ed's response Thank you for your letter, Mike. While we try to achieve an even balance of features in terms of subject

matter in the magazine, we acknowledge that most readers have a special interest in a particular aspect of outdoor photography. *Landscape* has always been a core subject in *OP*, but we also strive to dedicate a good proportion of the pages to wildlife, and regularly showcase the work of nature and wildlife and nature photographers practising in the UK and beyond. We have taken on board your request for more nature and wildlife photography in *OP* and would love to hear from anyone else who shares Mike's views, or has an opinion about the balance of features in the magazine.

How did he do that?

My friend and I have just been going through the October issue, and were knocked out by the image on page 24 by Dudley Williams (*Lie of the land*, OP184).

The article does not say how the photograph was taken, and we would like to know how he achieved it. My friend paints watercolours and thinks the colours are amazing.

Karen Baylis, *via email*



Dudley's reply The location is Scarista beach on the Isle of Harris. The photo was made on my first visit there, but I have been back many times since. A lot of people ask me if it's Australia.

The day I visited it was very windy. Fortunately for me the wind was blowing out to sea from the land. This meant that I could photograph without sea spray hitting my lens. I'm not a weather expert, but I did notice that the wind was blowing out to sea (from right to left in the image) and taking the crests off the waves as they broke, while the clouds were being blown in the opposite direction. The apparent motion in the image comes from a shutter speed of about one or two seconds. During that time the movement of the clouds and water are captured, but, because my camera was firmly anchored to a tripod, the rest of the scene is rendered static. So, even though the image has a calm appearance, it owes its atmosphere to the less than calm conditions.

I don't use Photoshop or do anything drastic to my photographs. The colours are courtesy of the Isle of Harris; golden sands, turquoise waters and fluffy clouds. If you have a look at my website (dudleywilliams.com) you will see lots more of magical Harris.



Photo: Paul Wakefield

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www.openstudioworkshops.com





IN CONVERSATION WITH Neil Aldridge

Fresh from being crowned GDT European Wildlife Photographer of the Year, Neil Aldridge talks about his commitment to getting photographs that tell a conservation story and his enduring passion for southern Africa and its wildlife

Interview by Steve Watkins

above Red fox portrait, from Neil's new long-term UK-based project, which explores the relationship between foxes and people.

opposite A lion cub reaches for a moment of intimacy with its father shortly before this big male was lured across the Botswana border and shot by South African farmers.

When casually observed, destiny can appear to represent an easy ticket to success. Coming from a camera-toting family that spans three generations, British conservation photographer Neil Aldridge seemingly had all the stars aligned for him, but nowadays entry into the upper echelons of professional wildlife photography is never a free ride. A few of the keys to making a career of it are having the desire, commitment and endurance to keep going the extra mile to make images that stand out from the masses, even when the immediate rewards are hard to quantify. Neil has those characteristics aplenty.

'Photography has been in my life longer than wildlife has,' he says. 'My great grandfather was a press photographer in Yorkshire, and then it continued on my father's side of the family. Although I never met my grandfather, I know we still have his camera, and that he won a few awards as a serious amateur. Those skills and that interest passed down to my

father who, as far as I can remember, has always had cameras, and he encouraged me to use them.'

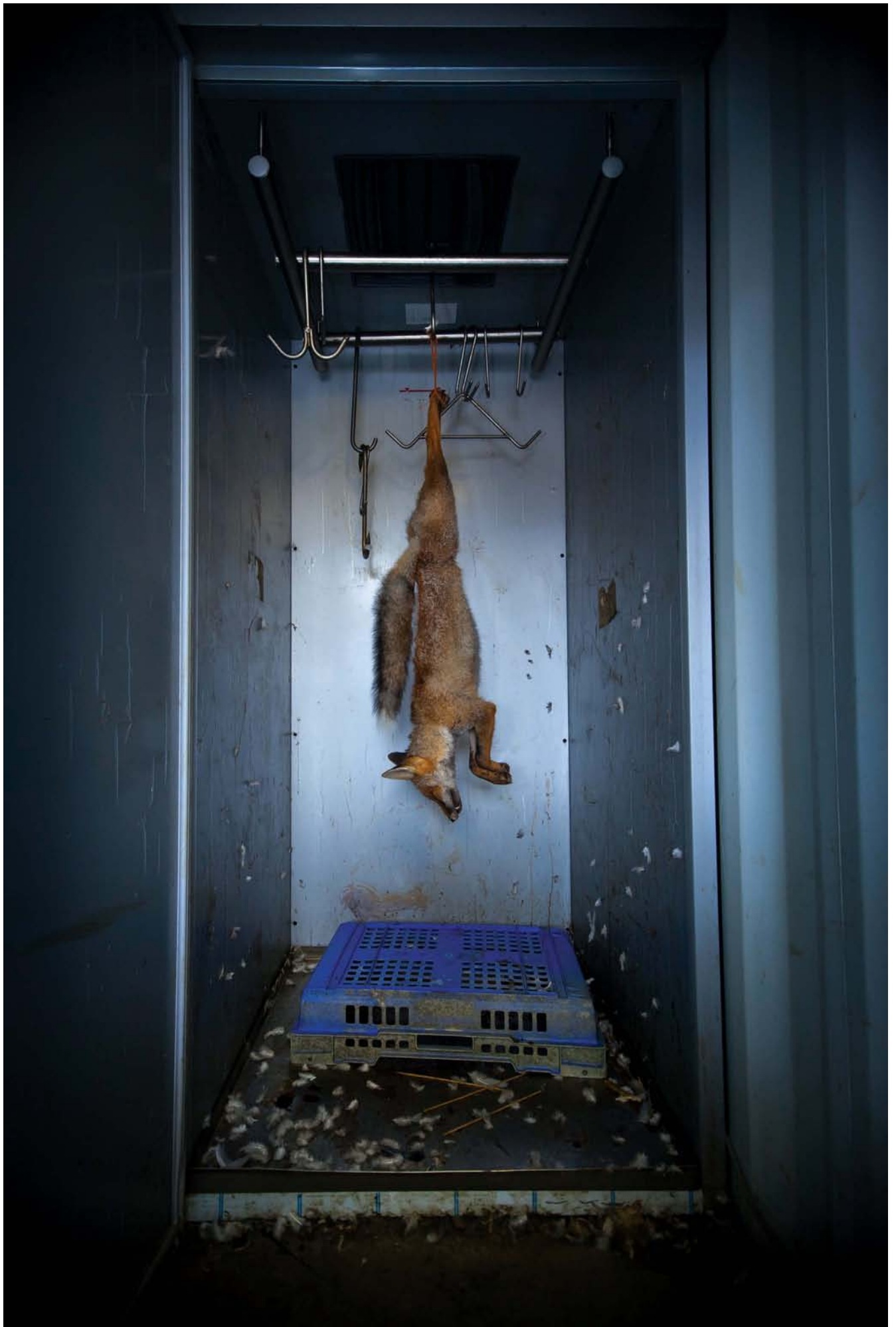
Connecting photography with wildlife took a little longer. 'Wildlife experiences for the first seven or eight years of my life, while I was living in the UK, were mainly limited to seeing pictures and video taken by my parents during the 70s while they were living in Africa. Every Sunday evening my dad would put on a slideshow of pictures and project old cine films, but it wasn't until we went to Africa on a family holiday in 1990 that I had my first proper encounters with wildlife. I was only eight, and we spent a few days in the Kruger National Park; some of those memories, such as having a zebra trot along right next to the car and seeing my first lion, have stayed with me to this day.'

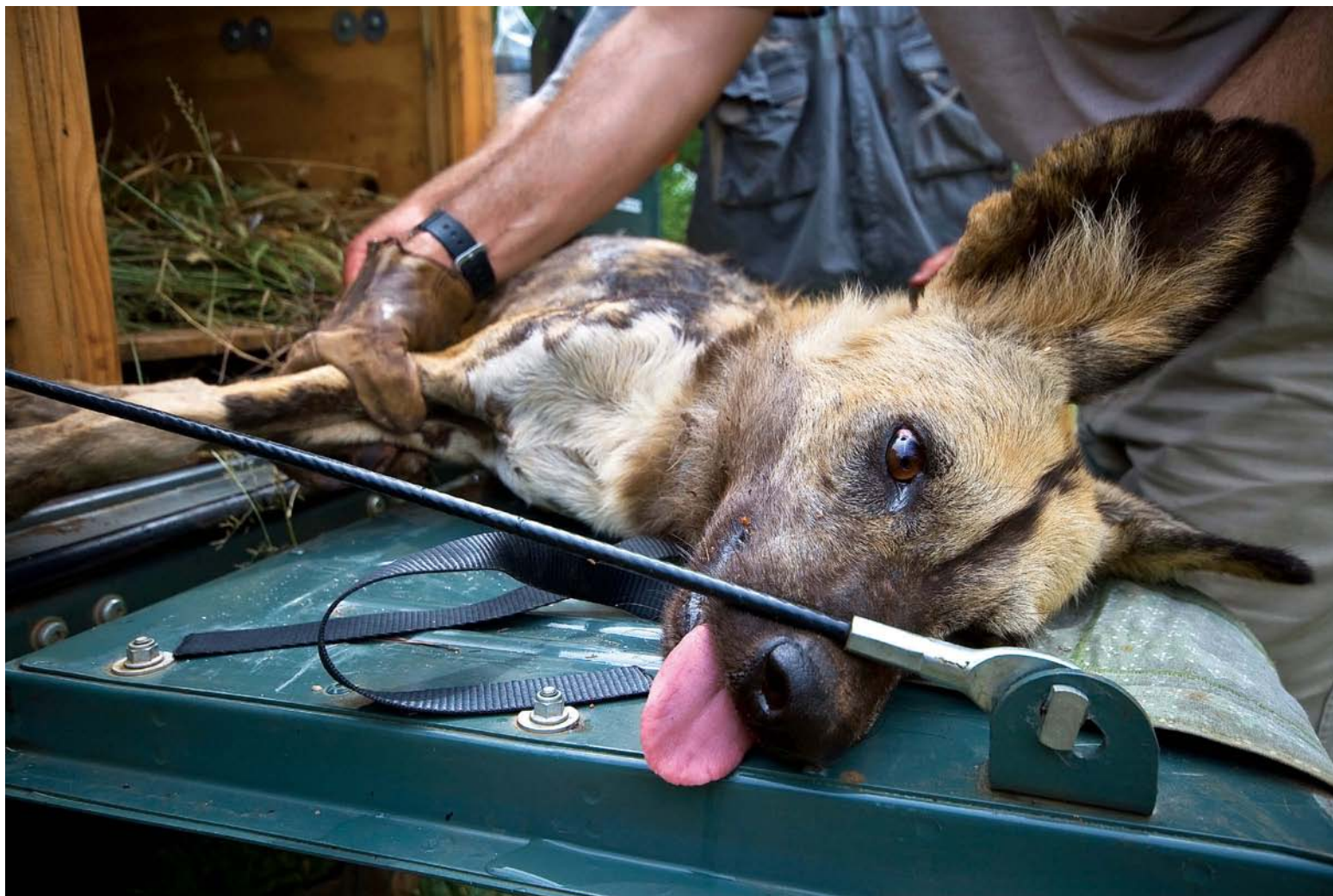
After their month-long adventure, Neil and his family had only been back home in Sheffield for a short time when a company merger meant his father was faced with the choice of moving to a new role in London or taking redundancy.











The latter option opened the possibility for the family to head back to South Africa, but this time to live. Almost inevitably, the discussion led to overwhelming approval for going to Africa.

From then on, every Aldridge family holiday was spent in the bush. By the age of 12, Neil had moved on from just looking for big game to getting into birding, and then a 17th birthday present seriously ramped up his interest in wildlife photography. Neil recalls, 'My dad bought me a Pentax MZ-50 with a 300mm lens, and that camera opened up a whole new world. In 2000, my mum and I took a trip for a few weeks into the bush when I was between school and university. We had some fantastic experiences, and I took quite a lot of photos I was really pleased with, including some portraits of lions. They were the first images that helped me to understand what makes a good photo. I would compare my images with the ones published in my favourite photography magazines and asked myself if mine were as good, and if not why not.'

He recalls, 'Five years after that trip, I had some time off while I was waiting to start a course at the Antares Field Guide Training Centre. I spent a small fortune on film, and did a photo project on a family of spotted eagle owls living on the river near our house in Johannesburg. I went out every single day to photograph them, in very difficult conditions due to the thick bush on the riverbank. I was shooting film, getting them processed that same day and then looking at them and thinking, why didn't that one work? I'd then go back and shoot it again that evening. It was a massive learning curve.'

This analytical, dedicated and meticulous approach seems to be innate in Neil. He admits he learnt golf by buying only

one club and hitting with it until it felt right, and then he would buy another club and repeat the process. 'It's a bit systematic and metronomic,' he says, but it's often that sort of commitment that differentiates experts in any field.

It was during his field guide training that Neil had the first inklings he wanted to be a photojournalist, rather than just a photographer. 'As part of the training, I had to research and present on African wild dogs. I realised there are so many other elements to their lives and their fight for survival, and you rarely see images of those aspects: the managed intervention research – darting and trans locations, things they have to do to keep the gene pool fresh. I think it's tragic that it has got to the stage where we have to move dogs around, like pieces on a chessboard, to pair them up. I knew I wanted to tell a more complete story.'

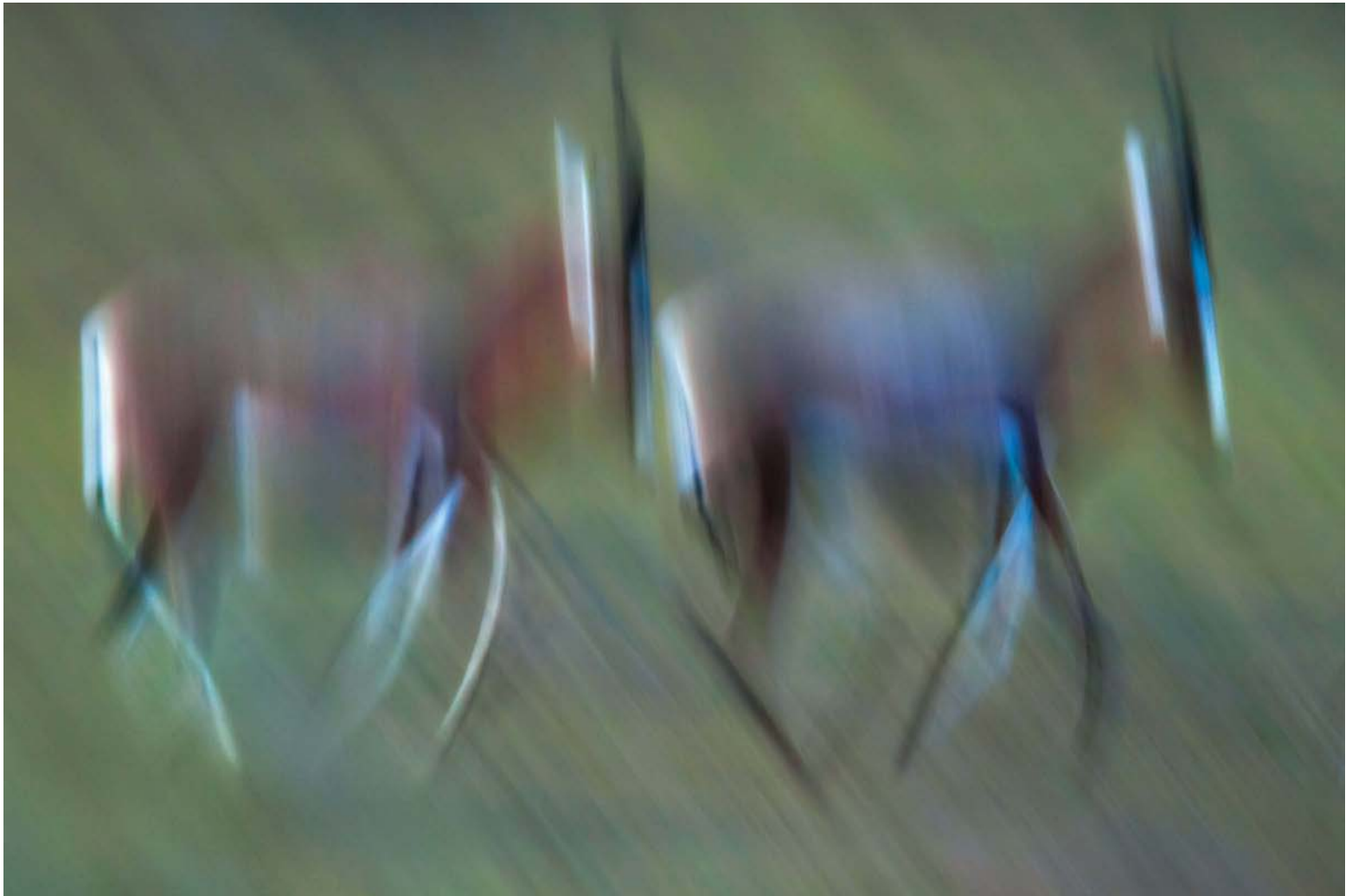
A few years later, in 2008, Neil was back in the UK and living in Yorkshire while working on a BBC project with the Wildlife Trusts. His contract was coming to an end, which allowed him the opportunity to do a masters degree in photojournalism at University of the Arts London. Not one to rest on his laurels, Neil wrote to the Endangered Wildlife Trust in Johannesburg to start the ball rolling on the wild dog story before he had even started his university course. 'I went straight out to South Africa and did my first recce trip, got some shots and met all the right people, and basically put a project plan in place,' he says.

While the photojournalism course gave him the time and focus to develop stories, Neil feels a critical aspect of it was that it wasn't run by only photographers. 'Although we had guest photographers come in to speak to us, our main contacts were with photography agents, photo library managers and photo

above Researchers prepare to transport a young male wild dog 900km to his new home, where it is hoped he will establish a new breeding pack. This image was central to Neil's African wild dog project.

opposite A red fox hangs in a chiller after being caught and shot for killing pheasants. Neil took the picture during his time working alongside a gamekeeper for his latest photo story.

previous spread Through sales of his book *Underdogs*, Neil supported conservation efforts to protect wild dogs like this pup on Zimbabwe's Save Valley Conservancy.



above A pair of galloping blesbok antelope at Bushman's River in South Africa's Kariega Game Reserve. The shot won Neil the title of GDT European Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2014.

editors; the ones who make the decisions about what gets published. They weren't emotional about it in the way that photographers would be, and would simply say if something wasn't good enough. Course organisers shouldn't set people up to fail; you want to come out of it with a realistic outlook.'

Although his local knowledge and connections make it easy for Neil to continue concentrating on southern Africa for much of his work, it is the stories the region offers that are a major driver for his enduring passion. 'The land formally set aside for conservation there is growing, and they are at the forefront of the transfrontier park concept, where neighbouring countries are working together to protect wildlife on either side of their borders. But at the same time, the region's population is booming, as is the outside investment, from China in particular, in places such as Angola and Namibia. Also, there is always pressure on some of the most sensitive sites, such as the Okavango Delta – it seems that every year they are discussing whether they should be taking water off the Okavango further up the river. That would have significant impacts not only on wildlife but also on the people living lower down the river, and the economy of Botswana would take a massive hit.'

Neil did a lot of work for his wild dog project round Mapungubwe National Park, on the border with Zimbabwe and Botswana. It is historically one of South Africa's most important sites, and it's a World Heritage site, yet the South African government recently granted a licence for a coalmine just six kilometres away from the edge of the park. He says, 'It's right on the banks of the Limpopo River, and there is a threat of the run-off from the mine going into the Limpopo

and then further down the river to the Kruger National Park and on into Mozambique. Southern Africa is going to be experiencing these issues more and more, so there are stories to tell there. Photography has a very important role to play, it reminds people and companies involved in these decisions and operations that the world is watching.'

Although Neil's feelings about these sorts of issues are plain to see, he feels it is important to maintain a more neutral approach to his work. He says, 'I try to show things in as even handed a way as possible, so people are able to see an issue without me saying, you should see this the way I see it. An example of this is a project I am currently working on in the UK about foxes. I find the relationship people in the UK have with foxes fascinating; some people love them and others despise them. I've been working with a gamekeeper to get shots of the management side of the story; I couldn't do it, but my background in wildlife and conservation allows me to see other people's opinions. It helps if we can at least have a respectful conversation, while knowing that we are coming at it from different angles but they are rooted in reason. In this way, I often find people are happy to let me work with them and have access to their side of the story.'

It is thanks to this balanced, resourceful and insightful approach and his unrelenting pursuit of compelling storytelling methods that Neil is widely acclaimed as one of the rising stars in the world of conservation photography.

To see more of Neil's work and to find out more about his new photo adventure tours, go to conservationphotojournalism.com

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A perfect storm

Witnessing the wild beauty of Connemara in suitably dramatic conditions reminds Norman McCloskey what it is that drives him to get out there with his camera, whatever the weather

The alarm goes off at 4.15am and my first reaction is to wonder what's going on. Slowly I come round and there's the unmistakable sound of heavy rain hitting the roof, which would prompt any normal person to go straight back to sleep. I peer out the window and am able to confirm that it is indeed the kind of morning you wouldn't put the cat out in. Perfect, I think!

I'm on holiday, in Connemara in the west of Ireland, with my wife and two children. It's been a hectic year and the break is long overdue. The disapproving look from my wife as the last bag is packed with my camera and tripod is met with reassurance from me that this won't turn into a photography trip.

But there's nothing more powerful than the lure of a landscape that absolutely captures your imagination and offers endless possibilities around every bend. We had set out to drive north along the newly designated Wild Atlantic Way, which is apparently the longest defined coastal driving route in the world. Once we arrive in Connemara, however, my resistance is at breaking point and I quickly become preoccupied with taking mental notes of locations and calculating where the light will fall at dawn and dusk.

So here I am, letting myself out of the locked-up hotel at 4.30am and stepping out into the gloom. The past few days of beaches, fun, drinks and dinner have been great, but as I drive along the narrow coastal road with the wind gusting and rain hammering down, I feel even more energised than before.

For a while it looks like I probably should have stayed in bed, but this isn't a results-driven thing for me. I've been heading out on shoots for years and coming back empty handed, but have rarely regretted going out.

Slowly the rain eases off, and through the murky greyness I can detect a small chink of light, and that's all I need to see.



There's nothing more powerful than the lure of a landscape that absolutely captures your imagination and offers endless possibilities around every bend

Blue skies and fluffy clouds are not my thing, and the brooding drama of this morning begins to present endless possibilities in this wonderful landscape.

We are often asked where an image was taken and what settings we used. This photograph in some ways answers

a question that is rarely asked: why did you take that shot? You only get to witness the beauty of the landscape at its best, even on a bad day, by getting out there and experiencing it. And on this morning I knew that staying in bed was not an option. ■



South Iceland Crash Site

Hasselblad H5-50,
28mm f4 Lens, f11,
2 minutes & 8 secs, ISO50

Filters used:
1.2 ND Hard Grad
Big Stopper

As soon as I saw this scene I knew I could create a shot full of drama and mystery. A howling wind raged around us and the clouds were scudding across the sky. Everything was in place for a truly exceptional image. I knew that if I could extend my exposure time to minutes rather than mere seconds, I would be able to achieve something more creative and unusual.

It was midsummer in Iceland, therefore we had daylight conditions for 24 hours a day. As a result, it was never going to be dark enough to achieve an exposure of several minutes with only a graduated neutral-density filter. A 1.2 ND grad gave me the dark clouds I was visualising, and the addition of a Big Stopper extended the exposure to more than two minutes, while retaining an optimum aperture of f/11.



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IMPROVE

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UNDER THE STARRY SKY

Dan Santillo shows you how to capture stellar landscape images



How to shoot astrophotography landscapes

Discover a new world of image-making opportunities, as **Dan Santillo** introduces the creative and technical approaches to taking incredible photographs after dark

Many photographers will finish shooting just after sunset or start just before sunrise, unaware that they can use their camera during the hours of darkness in between to capture a whole different type of image. Anyone can shoot the night sky with their DSLR – without the need for any special

equipment. A camera is more sensitive to light than our eyes; in the right conditions you can even capture the Andromeda galaxy with your DSLR and a 17mm lens. Astrophotography brings a whole raft of new challenges, and you won't even know what you're shooting until you've taken the photo!

WORKING IN THE DARK

There are a number of practicalities to consider when shooting at night. Firstly, you need to be able to see what you're doing without impairing your night vision; ideally, use a torch with a red LED; this will provide just enough light to see the camera buttons. A head torch is particularly useful because it leaves your hands free. If you use white light, from a torch, for example, it will take a long time for your eyes to become accustomed to the dark again each time you use it.

Night-time exposures are very long and you will spend a lot of time standing around, so you will probably get cold. Take

winter clothing, even in summer – you can always take clothing off but you can't put on clothing you left at home. A hat and a pair of gloves should always be in your bag, and make sure you take food and drink. It is worth staying close to the car or path, as even familiar places appear different in the dark and it is very easy to become lost. Always tell someone where you are going, and if heading into the hills consider taking a tent to get out of the cold – this is very useful if you're shooting star trails for an hour or more.

CAPTURING THE NIGHT

To photograph the night sky you will need to focus your lens on infinity, and there are a few ways to do this. You can focus your lens on a distant point when it is light and then mark on your lens where it is (consider using a piece of tape across the focusing ring); use autofocus on a distant point of light; use live view zoomed in on a bright star to manual focus; or use the scale on the lens (this isn't accurate on all lenses).

Getting the exposure right

There are very few settings you can use at night. As you can't see what you're taking, it's best to use your camera in manual mode: try setting the ISO to 3200, the exposure time to 20 seconds, and the lens as wide open as you can; a large aperture such as f/2.8 is best, although f/4 is perfectly usable. Then, with the lens focused at infinity on your widest angle lens, take a photo. If it is too dark and you can't see any stars, try ISO 6400 or increase the exposure time. If it is too light, reduce the ISO or the exposure time.

You should always shoot in Raw rather than JPEG because it allows you far more flexibility with the

post-processing – you are pushing your camera to the extremes, so you need as much data from the sensor as possible.

The 600 rule

If you want to capture pin-point stars rather than star trails, you need to do a bit of simple maths. There is a useful formula, called the 600 rule, that enables you to work out the maximum exposure length possible before stars will begin to trail; the longer the focal length of your lens, the shorter the exposure.

If you are using a full-frame camera, divide 600 by the focal length of your lens. For example, if you are using a 24mm lens, 25 seconds is the maximum exposure length before trailing occurs. In reality, you can probably get away with a few seconds more, but stars away from the celestial equator will start to become lines.

If your camera has a smaller sensor you need to factor the crop factor into the focal length. For a crop factor of 1.6, for example, your maximum exposure length would be: 600 divided by (24mm x 1.6) = 15.625 seconds.

STAR TRACKERS

For longer exposures without star trails, it might be worth considering a portable tracking mount such as the Vixen Polaris (see page 33 to find out how you can win one!) or the AstroTrac TT320X-AG. They attach to a standard camera tripod and feature an integrated compass so that they can be aligned with Polaris, or the North Star. Once set, they follow Earth's rotation and track the movement of stars to eliminate trailing. Tracking mounts can enable exposures of one to five minutes when used with a wideangle lens, but be aware that they will cause the landscape to blur so you need to find the maximum exposure length that works best. Keeping land features distant can help.



Fan Brycheiniog, Brecon Beacons National Park.
Canon EOS 5D MkII with 17-40mm lens at 20mm, ISO 6400, 25sec at f/4, tripod

Mumbles Lighthouse, Bracelet Bay, Swansea.
Canon EOS 6D with 14mm Samyang lens, ISO 3200, 15sec at f/4.5, tripod; several images stacked to create star trails as sunrise approached

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

» 13 December 2014

The Geminids: a meteor shower with up to 120 meteors per hour. Between 17 and 25 December 2014, the rate is around 10 meteors per hour.

» 6 February 2015

Opposition of Jupiter: the Earth passes between the sun and Jupiter, making this the best time to photograph the planet and its moons.

» 22 February 2015

Conjunction of Venus and Mars: the two bright planets will be close to each other in the sky. Look to the west just after sunset.

» 20 March 2015

Total Solar Eclipse: the moon will completely block the sun, and it will be partially visible from parts of Northern Europe, Africa and Asia.

» 12-13 August 2015

Perseids Meteor Shower: this annual shower produces 60 meteors per hour at its peak, this year on the night of 12 August and the morning of 13 August.



Worm's Head, Rhossili Bay, Gower.
Canon EOS 5D MkII with Samyang 14mm lens,
ISO 400, 30sec at f/4, tripod

PHOTOGRAPHING TWILIGHT

It takes around two hours after sunset for the sky to become completely dark, but this is by no means time to sit around and wait. As the sky darkens after sunset, the brighter stars start to appear and there is still colour in the sky (predominantly blue). This is a great time to start shooting, as there can be some good colours in the sky and you can still capture stars and retain detail in the foreground.

When the moon is out, or even just below the horizon, it can wash out the sky and hide a lot of

stars. While this can be disappointing, you can use it to your advantage. Only the brighter stars will be visible and these are typically ones that form the common constellations such as Cassiopeia and Ursa Major (the Plough), so they will be easily identifiable in your photos. Depending on how bright the moon is, you can decrease the ISO to minimise noise. With a bright moon, ISO 800 is achievable, sometimes even ISO 400.

PRO TIPS

» The light from the moon can be strong enough to cast your shadow, so be aware of it when shooting.

» With a wideangle lens such as 14mm and f/4.5, the 'burst' effect is possible when photographing the moon.

» Be sure to turn off in-camera noise reduction, as it has no effect on Raw images.

USEFUL ASTRO INFORMATION

» Stellarium

An open source program that shows you a map of the night sky in real time. This is great for planning, and also for identifying constellations after you've taken the photo: stellarium.org

» Google Sky Map

Free on Android; point your phone at the sky and it will tell you what you are seeing: google.co.uk/mobile/skymap

» Aurora forecast

It is possible to see the Aurora Borealis in the UK at times. This website has a three-day forecast – look for Kp numbers of around seven: aurora-service.eu/aurora-forecast

» Moon timetable

Use this website to check for the moon brightness, its location in the sky, and when it will rise and set: timeanddate.com/moon

» Spot the station

Find out when the International Space Station will pass across the sky: spotthestation.nasa.gov

» PhotoPills

Use this handy app to determine when the moon will be exactly where you want it, for any location on Earth. photopills.com

LIGHTING THE FOREGROUND

Photographing just the night sky produces great results, but it's often more interesting to add a sense of location by including the landscape around you, or a local landmark. The problem is that because it is dark, the foreground is also dark. There are a couple of ways around this: you can take a very long exposure for the foreground and blend it with a shorter for the sky; or 'paint' the foreground with a torch.

Exposure blending

After taking the exposure for the sky, set the camera to bulb mode and open the shutter. The camera will capture enough light to record the foreground. It can be a hit and miss affair, so try a 60-second exposure, then 120, and so on, until you are happy with what you have. Then, on the computer, blend it with the star shot to create the composite image

– there are lots of free online tutorial videos to show you how to do this. Try photoshop.com/tutorials.

Light painting

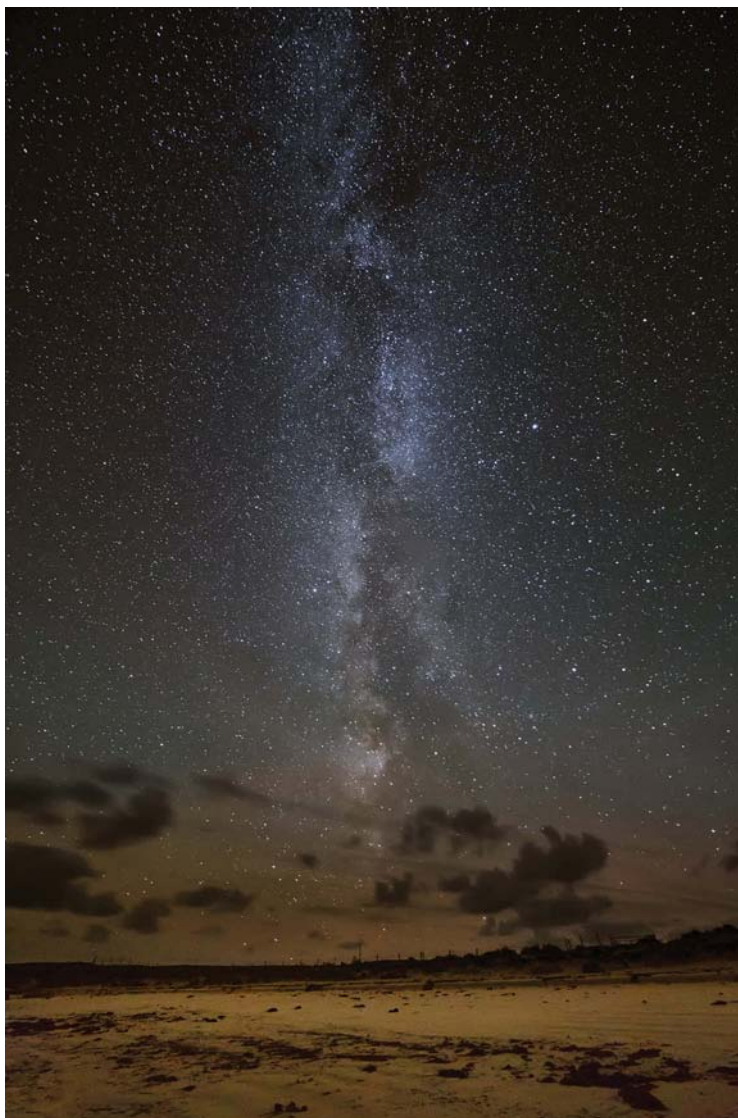
An alternative to exposure blending is to paint the foreground with a torch, but this takes practice. The method will only light the ground next to you, so any distant objects will remain dark, and bear in mind that you will need less light than you might think.

Start the exposure, turn your torch on and move it across the foreground, lighting up everything, but be careful not to paint the same area twice. Turn your torch off again and let the exposure finish. If the foreground appears too bright in the image, reduce the torch brightness or move the torch more quickly across the foreground. If the image appears too dark, increase the torch brightness or move the torch more slowly over the landscape.

PRO TIPS

» The moon can provide enough of a glow to light up the foreground; you can even make the moon part of the image.

» In the dark, the image on the screen on the back of your camera will look very bright. If you judge the brightness by the image alone you'll probably end up with a lot of underexposed foregrounds. Make sure you use the histogram, and bracket.



The Milky Way from Gurteen Bay, Connemara, Ireland.
Canon EOS 6D with 14mm Samyang lens, ISO 6400, 30sec at f/2.8, tripod;
two images combined



The moon over Fan Fawr, Brecon Beacons National Park.
Canon EOS 6D with 14mm Samyang lens, ISO 800, 20sec at f/4.5, tripod;
two photos combined for foreground

EXPERIMENTING

Star trails

For star trails, the best method is to take a number of short exposures, one after another, and stack them using software such as StarTrails (startrails.de) – see ‘Image stacking’ sidebar. You can also create a time-lapse video from the frames. Be sure to turn off long exposure noise reduction to avoid gaps in the trails.

Constellations

Try zooming into a constellation and photographing just those stars. You can use a plug-in such as StarSpikes Pro 2 (prodigitalsoftware.com) to emphasise the brighter stars.

Panoramas

Panoramas at night are a hit and miss affair. Be sure to reduce noise and correct the lens distortion before stitching and expect to have to hand stitch them, as it is unlikely software will do it automatically. Match the brightest stars to assist the software.



Top Star trails above Snowdonia National Park. Canon EOS 5D MkII with 17-40mm lens at 17mm, ISO 200, 30min at f/5.6, tripod; several images stacked

Above Panoramic view from Merthyr Tydfil to Brecon, Brecon Beacons National Park. Canon EOS 5D MkII with Samyang 14mm lens, ISO 3200, 27sec at f/2.8, tripod; 17 photos stitched

IMAGE STACKING

Image stacking is used in astrophotography to increase the signal-to-noise ratio. When you shoot at high ISOs you get noisy images, which you then have to run an algorithm on. This can degrade the image quality. To solve this problem, you can shoot several photos and combine them so that the noise averages out while the signal (i.e stars) is kept.

By shooting several images, you also stand more chance of capturing the more distant stars, which emit very little light, so there will be more detail in the photos. You might even start to capture deep space phenomena such as nebulae.

To stack photos to increase signal-to-noise ratio, use DeepSkyStacker, a free software application: deepskystacker.free.fr.

1/ Mount your camera on a tripod, and use the 600 rule to work out your exposure settings (see page 29).

2/ Use an intervalometer, and set it to take between 50 and 100 consecutive photos. Make sure in-camera noise reduction is turned off, and don't touch the camera or tripod while taking the photos.

3/ Export the files as 8-bit TIFFs.

4/ Stack them in DeepSkyStacker, but be sure to set the alignment to automatic, as this will take out the rotation of the Earth.

5/ Correct image levels and fine-tune it in Photoshop (see opposite page).

POST-PROCESSING

To produce good astrophotography images, a lot of the work lies with the post-processing. Here are some pointers that will make your images shine.

Dealing with noise

Shooting at high ISOs means your photos will be noisy. The first thing to do in Lightroom is to remove the noise as much as possible without degrading the image. The theory is that the noise is uniform across the image, but as soon as you start modifying the image in post-processing, you distort the noise. To overcome this, zoom in to 100% and adjust the Luminance Noise Reduction slider until the noise is down to a suitable level – be careful not to reduce it too much, or the photo will look unnatural. Check the foreground hasn't been too badly affected, because it will be more noticeable than in the sky.

It can be advantageous to carefully run a noise reduction algorithm on the finished image, such as Dfine. The plug-in, part of the Google Nik Collection, allows you to adjust contrast and reduce colour noise separately. A free trial version is available google.com/nikcollection. Without using an image stacking technique (see left) it is unlikely you'll have smooth pictures; instead the aim is to reduce noise to a satisfactory level.

Colour temperature

Night photos tend to have a colder colour temperature. Start by setting the white balance to 3000K and work from there – try to make the sky as black as possible, while keeping the stars white.

Lens correction

Shooting at large apertures means you will probably have severe vignetting in the corners. Lightroom comes with a number of profiles to help remove this, and you can download additional profiles at adobe.com/support/downloads.

In the Develop module, go to Lens Corrections,

Profile and select the lens profile if it isn't already selected. Check the 'Enable Profile Corrections' box and move the vignetting slider until you are happy. If you go too high, noise will become very apparent.

Enhancing the stars

The Clarity slider is an astrophotographer's best friend. Make sure you only adjust the sky, not the foreground, and choose a high setting – perhaps even try 100%. Be aware that it might affect horizons with halos, increase vignetting and also noise. If you reduce the noise first, the effect is manageable.

Contrast

Adding contrast will make the sky blacker, but you may need to readjust some other settings to keep the image balanced.

Editing tools

The Curves, Saturation, Highlights and Shadows controls in Photoshop are useful tools for fine-tuning.

» **Curves:** Place three points (top, middle and bottom) on the Tone Curve and adjust them carefully until the stars look their best – you might need to readjust the contrast afterwards.

» **Saturation:** Treat this slider with caution, as going too far will make the photo look unrealistic but increasing it a small amount can work well. Watch out for noise pollution becoming too orange.

» **Highlights:** Increasing this slightly will make the stars stand out more, but too much and it will increase the noise.

» **Shadows:** Increasing this can bring some detail out in the foreground, but again too much and noise will become a problem or the sky will become too light.

10 STEPS TO SUCCESS

1 Use a wideangle lens to capture as much of the sky as possible. Include some foreground, but make it mostly sky.

2 Shoot wide open to allow as much light as possible into the lens. Be aware, though, that this will highlight flaws such as softness, comatic aberration and vignetting.

3 Be prepared to stay out for several hours. Once you start photographing the night sky, it becomes rather addictive.

4 Wear warm clothes because it can be very cold standing around in the dark. Even if it isn't cold, take warm clothing just in case, as hours of inactivity will make it feel colder than it actually is.

5 Be aware of light pollution, as it washes out stars and makes the horizon appear orange. Try to get away from towns or cities if you can. The Dark Sky Discovery website has a map with some of the best stargazing places in the UK: darkskydiscovery.org.uk.

6 Use a programmable timer to shoot star trails so you can set it going and sit in the warmth of your tent, car or house, but make sure in-camera noise reduction is off.

7 Be aware of dew, which can easily form on the lens. Lens heaters are one solution, or you can try a handheld fan. A lens hood can help reduce the chances of it forming.

8 If you want to photograph the Milky Way, go out in the summer months, when it is most visible.

9 Experiment with your torch – illuminate a tent, write your name, stand with it pointing towards the lens.

10 When leaving the location, switch your torch back to white light and check you haven't left anything behind.

WIN A VIXEN POLARIE STAR TRACKER, WORTH £299!

Outdoor Photography has teamed up with Vixen Optics to offer readers the chance to win a superb astrophotography product that will help you to create out of this world images. The Vixen Polarie Star Tracker makes it possible to capture nightscapes and star images with ease.

Incredibly compact and lightweight, the mount attaches to a standard tripod and can be used with any camera weighing up to 3kg. It features a North Star alignment window that you point at Polaris, and once set it tracks the motion of the stars, resulting in sharp images of the cosmos. The Polarie operates with two AA batteries and is extremely accurate.

For more information about Vixen Optics' product range visit vixenoptics.com.

For your chance to win this fantastic astrophotography kit, simply answer this question:

What is the name of the star that the Polarie uses to rotate parallel to the Earth's orbit?

- A Sirius
- B Polaris
- C Capella

Send your answer to opcomp@thegmcgroup.com, stating 'Vixen Polarie' as the subject, or drop it in the post, along with a contact telephone number, to 'Vixen Polarie', OP, 86 High Street, Lewes, East Sussex, BN7 1XN. Deadline for entries is midnight on 9 January 2015. The winner will be announced in the March 2015 issue (on sale 12 February 2015). Only one entry per person is allowed. No cash prize alternative is available.



TAKE PART! Enter our 'astrophotography landscapes' competition – turn to page 111 for details

QUICK GUIDE TO...

Planning a landscape shoot

Fortune favours the prepared mind when it comes to shooting successful landscapes.

Lee Frost explains why, and reveals how you can maximise your chances of success

There's nothing worse than busting a gut to get to a great location only to find that the weather's naff, or you arrive there at totally the wrong time of day...

Actually, I lie! There is something worse: racing to a new location when the light's amazing, not really knowing where you need to shoot from, and getting to your chosen spot just as the sun disappears behind a bank of cloud.

It has happened to the best of us, but if you put a little planning into your landscape shoots, the risk of messing up will be dramatically reduced. It's all about knowing where to go and when, and thanks to modern technology and endless information available on the internet, organising a photography trip is easier than ever before.

There will always be an element of risk involved in shooting landscapes because we're at the mercy of the weather, which can be unpredictable and unreliable. But by taking control of all the other factors and leaving as little as possible to chance, success is far more likely than failure.



A straight shot of the scene, taken once the sun had broken through the cloud

For the final image I used a B+W 10-stop ND filter to add warmth and atmosphere to the scene



HOW TO PLAN A LANDSCAPE SHOOT

» Recce your chosen location before you intend to photograph it so that you can establish where it is, how long it will take to get there and where the best viewpoints are. Google Earth can be useful at this stage (google.com/earth).

» While at the location, use a compass to determine the direction you'll be facing when photographing the scene so that you can work out where the sun will be and the best time of day to return. It will generally be dawn or dusk.



» Check the weather forecast repeatedly as the shoot time gets closer. No forecasting website is totally reliable so I use three – metoffice.gov.uk, xcweather.co.uk and metcheck.com – and hope that they agree!

▼ If the weather looks favourable, aim to arrive on location at least 30 minutes before you're likely to start shooting, so you're not chasing the light. If conditions aren't great when you arrive, be patient and wait.



▼ I arrived at this location before sunrise, but the eastern sky was full of cloud. It looked highly unlikely that the sun would ever break through, but after almost two hours the sun rose above the cloud and bathed the scene in light.



FIVE ESSENTIAL TIPS

- 1 If at first you don't succeed, try again. If it was easy to take great landscapes everyone would be doing it, and the thrill of bagging an awesome image would be reduced. It may take several visits before you get the shots.
- 2 The appearance and character of the landscape changes dramatically throughout the year and in different weather conditions, so even if you get great shots on your first visit to a location, it's worth returning several times more.
- 3 If the light isn't great, take some reference shots that will help you in the future. If the location is difficult to get to, consider taking GPS readings as well so that you can find your way back at a later date – and share the information with others.
- 4 Don't overshoot the main scene. The beauty of digital capture is that you know when you've got the photograph you're after. You can then move on to an alternative composition and make the most of the light or experiment with different techniques.
- 5 Although a traditional compass is hard to beat when it comes to pinpointing the direction you're facing and determining where the sun will be through the day, you can get far more accurate readings using specialised apps (see below).

HANDY PLANNING APPS

There are two fantastic apps worth downloading to your smartphone or tablet that can be used during the planning and shooting of landscapes.

- » The best known is the **Photographer's Ephemeris** (photoephemeris.com). Compatible with iPhone, iPad, Android and desktop devices, it allows you to establish where and when the sun and moon will be in relation to any location in the world. The desktop version is free while the phone/tablet version costs £5.99 from the App Store.
- » **PhotoPills** (photopills.com) does a similar job – just take a shot of the scene with your smartphone then use the app to calculate when the sun will be in prime position. As well as sun and moon info, the app also includes exposure depth-of-field, field-of-view and time-lapse calculators. It even has Milky Way information, and much more. It costs £6.99 from the App Store and is only compatible with Apple products at the moment (an Android version will be launched soon).

Outdoor Photographer of the year 2014

In association with Fjällräven



Our fourth OPOTY competition is well under way. We've teamed up with Fjällräven to offer a prize that money can't buy. The overall winner will be off to the Arctic on the Fjällräven Polar dog sled expedition in spring 2015!

THE BIG PRIZE! FJÄLLRÄVEN POLAR

Fjällräven Polar is the adventure of a lifetime, giving 'ordinary' people the chance to discover how amazing outdoor life is in the winter. It aims to demonstrate that anyone can experience the Arctic on an expedition, as long as they have the right knowledge and equipment.

It is an approximately **300km-long winter adventure across the arctic tundra**. The participants will steer a dog sled all the way from Signaldalen, Norway, to the forests around Jukkasjärvi, Swedish Lapland, through some of the wildest and most beautiful scenery in the world. Conditions can be very challenging at times, even if the weather is usually quite stable in April north of the Arctic Circle. Survival expert Johan Skullman and dog sledding supremo Kenth Fjellborg will be on the expedition to share their knowledge with the participants.

Fjällräven Polar 2015 will take place between the 7 and 13 April 2015, and the overall winner of Outdoor Photographer of the Year will be going on the journey. Almost all the clothing, food and equipment needed for the expedition are included (you really can travel to Norway with just hand luggage!). This is an amazing prize that money simply cannot buy, so get your images ready to enter!

The only other possible way to take part in the expedition is to enter the separate Fjällräven Polar competition. You need to make and upload a short video or photograph. There is a worldwide public vote on which entries are the best. The entrants with the most votes in each country will also be on their way to the Arctic.

For more details on Fjällräven Polar and to see images and videos from previous expeditions, go to fjallraven.co.uk/polar.

New underwater category: Under exposed

There is some extraordinary underwater photography going on nowadays, as the equipment and technical knowledge becomes more accessible. We are looking for the best underwater images in our new category, Under exposed.

FREE!

Young Outdoor Photographer of the Year category

Once again, we want to encourage the next generation of photographers by waiving the entry fees for this specific category, which is open to people under the age of 18 on the competition deadline date.



OPOTY 2014 – THE CATEGORIES

Outdoor Photographer of the Year – Overall Winner

This prestigious title is given for the photograph, chosen from the adult category winners, that the judges feel is the best single image entered.

Light on the land

Under sunset's fiery skies, in fleeting twilight, with the gentler light of the moon, or with the first rays of a new day, we are looking for stunning landscape images from anywhere in the world.

Wildlife insight

There has never been a better time to be a wildlife photographer. We are looking for compelling compositions showing the spirit and behaviour of wildlife around the planet.

Live the adventure

Capture adventure activities and adventure travel around the globe. From hiking and mountain biking to intriguing cultures and amazing festivals, we want to see the thrill and beauty of life lived to its maximum.

At the water's edge

Lakes, rivers, waterfalls and the coast make for some of the most appealing outdoor photography subjects. We want to see inspiring images of them either in their wider environment or more intimate views.

Small world

Nature can be at its most amazing in the smallest forms. We want to see your macro and close-up photographs of the plants and insects all around us that often go unnoticed.

Under exposed

We want to celebrate the breathtaking photographic work that is going on underwater. From seas and oceans to rivers and lakes, we are looking for images that showcase the remarkable world beneath the surface.

Young Outdoor Photographer of the Year

Nature is my world: for outdoor photographers aged 18 or under, to shoot landscapes, nature or wildlife subjects that matter most to them.

Category winners' prizes

There can be only one Outdoor Photographer of the Year 2014 and one winner of the Fjällräven Polar expedition place, but we've got fantastic prizes for the winners of the seven individual categories as well. Each category winner will receive a superb Fjällräven Kaipak 28 backpack plus £200. *To find out more about the Kaipak 28, go to fjallraven.co.uk*



AWARDS AND EXHIBITION

The overall winner will be announced live at the Telegraph Outdoor Adventure & Travel Show, at London ExCeL, on Sunday 15th February 2015.

The presentation for the overall and category winners will take place on the *Outdoor Photography* PhotoBox stage. All the winning images will also be printed and exhibited at the show, providing a great chance to get your work seen.



LAST CALL – DON'T MISS OUT!
Deadline for entries is midnight GMT on Sunday 14 December 2014

[facebook.com/outdoorphotographymag](https://www.facebook.com/outdoorphotographymag) [@opoty](https://twitter.com/opoty)

FOR MORE DETAILS AND TO ENTER GO TO OPOTY.CO.UK

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For further info please visit www.tenba.com

An advertisement for 'Outdoor Photography' magazine. The central focus is a tablet displaying a promotional offer. Surrounding the tablet are several smartphones and other tablets, each showing different covers of the 'Outdoor Photography' magazine. The background is a light, neutral color.

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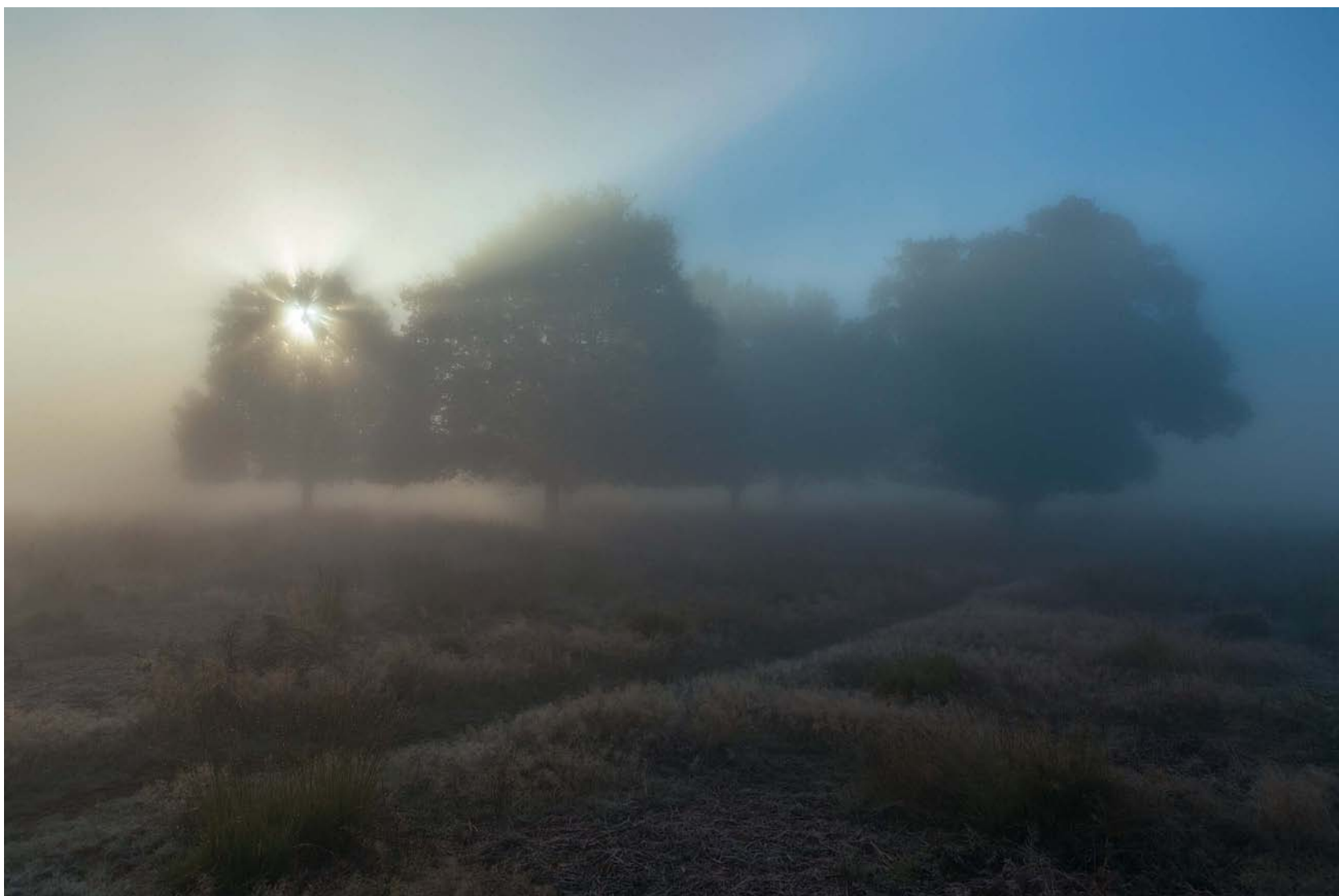
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As I walked out one morning

The unpredictability of nature means we often go on all-day shoots and return home empty-handed, but Daniel Hannabuss struck it lucky in Richmond Park on 5 October this year. These are just a few of the stunning shots he took in a matter of half an hour or so



Time: 08.08.04

This image was taken just after the golden glow phase, with the sun finally breaking above the low hanging mist. It initially caused the mist to thicken up as the sun started to burn off the moisture on the already heavily damp grass. With the mist and tree acting as a huge soft box the effect was pretty spectacular, with the shafts of light filtering out between the branches.

Canon EOS 6D with Canon 24-70mm f/2.8 lens at 24mm, ISO 200, 1/1500sec at f/5.6, handheld

>



Time: 07.49.28

This was an opportunistic capture, as just minutes before I had been fixated on searching out and photographing stags through the golden mist. The man and his dog were out for an early morning stroll. The moment was over almost before I'd realised it was happening.

Canon EOS 6D with Canon 70-300mm f/4-5.6 IS lens at 300mm, ISO 200, 1/3000sec at f/5.6, handheld

I'd been in touch with fellow outdoor photographer Craig Denford many times via social media, so it was great to finally put a face to the name when we met up this autumn for an early morning shoot at Richmond Park in London.

It was dark and cold as we entered the park, and almost immediately we heard the unmistakable and beautiful sound of stags barking, as they tried to impress the females.

We continued on, trying to make out the lie of the land in the gloomy pre-dawn light. The stars were disappearing quickly as the sky began to brighten, and the first rays of sunshine hitting the ground brought a little more sense to the landscape before us.

As we neared the middle of the park we caught a glimpse of where the ponds should be, but in their place was a thick



Time: 07.48.18

I had been shooting this stag under a canopy of trees, before he decided to move out into the clearing and inform anyone close by that this was his patch. I made the decision to leave the two other photographers – their silhouettes barely visible in the background – in the composition, as they reminded me of apparitions peering through the mist.

Canon EOS 6D with Canon 70-300mm f/4-5.6 IS lens at 300mm, ISO 200, 1/1500sec at f/5.6, handheld

layer of low-lying mist... bingo! These were the conditions we had been hoping for.

Our pace quickened as we descended into the mist. We anticipated that as the sun climbed a little higher it would create a rather special atmosphere. We weren't disappointed. The mist soon began to take on a light orange glow – gently at first, but becoming more intense by the minute.

Cue the stag, which arrived with perfect timing under some nearby trees surrounded by ferns and long grass. The next 30 minutes were some of the most memorable I've experienced as a photographer – the changing light and varied subject matter worked together in perfect harmony. It's times like this that remind me just how wonderful nature can be.

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By keeping his mind open to all image-making possibilities, Pete Bridgwood is able to realise the potential of a scene away from the obvious subject matter on Crosby beach, Merseyside

Crosby beach is the permanent home of Anthony Gormley's Another Place: 100 life-size cast iron sculptures of men placed at intervals on the long stretch of sand, standing and facing out to sea. Photographing the barnacle-encrusted statues along their sensational shoreline is a rite of passage for creative coastal photographers; there are myriad compositional possibilities to excite our attention in the quest for breathtaking imagery.

Iconic locations like Crosby are a test of self-discipline for a photographer, there are so many visual distractions that a state of compositional commotion can sometimes ensue. Realising our unease, we may immerse ourselves in the capture of our chosen scene, consciously ignoring the destructive distractions surrounding us. There is a danger, however, of becoming too absorbed with the job in hand; our preoccupation can result in us missing other potential shots in the vicinity, like this mile-marker. When photographing iconic locations, it can be worth looking over our shoulder occasionally to survey other unrelated viewpoints. There are trade-offs involved in achieving the optimum workflow when choosing

a composition; effectively balancing our creative focus on a chosen scene while maintaining a subliminal awareness of surrounding possibilities is one of them.

Another aspect that I have always found difficult to gauge is how much time to concentrate on a single composition. I could happily spend hours on one image, 'bracketing' all the possible alternatives in an attempt to capture the perfect photograph as the conditions change. Practically, to maximise productivity, I limit the time spent photographing any given image to allow time for surveying the location to find other compositions, but I can never be sure that I am not missing the perfect capture from my original position as the light changes. This is another trade-off, with an unknown optimum balance that will differ for each photographer and for each location.

I had been making long exposures of the Gormley sculptures in the pre-dawn light, when I became aware of the incoming tide starting to gently lap around the base of this mile-marker. As the western sky borrowed pastel twilight hues from the sunrise behind me, I made my 15-second exposure; enough to dynamise the water without losing structure in the clouds. ■

Crosby, Merseyside
Fujifilm X-Pro 1 with
Fujinon XF 14mm
f/2.8 R lens, ISO
200, 15sec at f/18,
Lee Seven5
Big-Stopper and
2-stop ND grad





Helping hands

*It is often said that the hand is where the mind meets the world; our hands have a language all of their own, and for **Paul Harris**, photographing them has become an enjoyable obsession*



Carmen peels off the banknotes with a fluid movement, which suggests that she has been doing this since she was a child. Chances are, she was given this responsibility long before any of us had been allowed anywhere near our own little piggy bank, such is the way in small ethnic communities. I had worked my way to the centre of the most colourful market I had seen in the Ecuadorean highlands. Purple shawls, jaunty trilbies and striped red ponchos swirled in and out, creating the effect of swimming among shoals of fish along an abundant coral reef. Behind Carmen, one of the workers who has brought in a huge cart of crops waits for his cut. Pesos are swiftly divided and Carmen goes back to the pile of burlap sacks, filling them with potatoes and tying off the tops neatly with a few half hitches.

In the dry Steppes of northern Mongolia, horse herders toil equally as nimbly, weaving new girth straps in preparation for a steep climb up the sacred mountain of Burkhan Kaldun to pay their respects to Genghis Khan, their notorious 12th-century ruler. After only a couple of weeks in the saddle I discover the importance of the strength and position of these simply made straps. The sure hooved stocky steeds were often required to find their way back home over many miles with a very inebriated passenger swaying alarmingly in the supremely secure saddle.

Deep in the heart of the H Upmann cigar factory in Havana, Juanita pauses for a second to allow me a closer look at the dried tobacco leaf she is working on. And it is literally a second. Time is money in the Cuban economy and the women employed to prepare the leaves for final wrapping move at lightning speed. Hands blur while stretching and stacking, and the daily gossip succeeds in overpowering a constant stream of socialist news flowing from a tannoy in every room of the factory. A few hundred metres away, at a makeshift ballet school, it is hard not to notice dexterity and gesture of a different language filling a cavernous and gloriously faded anteroom interior of Havana's main theatre.

These are among numerous moments of clarity in what has become one of my few photographic obsessions, which surfaces regardless of geography or project. Having a 'thing' for hands is not exactly new or innovative or even mildly weird, but I can claim to be in the lower tiers

of exalted artistic company such as da Vinci, Batoni and Raphael.

I can probably trace my interest in photographing hands back to some research I did into portraiture when studying documentary photography. American photographer Mary Ellen Mark developed great empathy with her subjects, who ranged from Hollywood actors and circus performers to street children and prostitutes. Her compatriot, Diane Arbus, shot uncompromising, some would say voyeuristic, and very direct portraits. Both photographers immediately stood out in their ability to capture expression, gesture and a sense of their subjects' place in their world, and hands frequently played an important role. One iconic image from the Arbus collection, *Child with a Toy Hand Grenade* (1962), was unnerving and comic simultaneously. The child's hands were not that noticeable at first glance but became the overpowering element of the picture.

And let's face it, you have to get in close for this kind of scrutiny unless you get sucked into a Mexican wave in a stadium or a protest march against unfair taxes, in which case, stand well back! Ever since I started making pictures professionally, first as a news photographer and then into the wider world of journalism and travel, the urge to get in close to my subjects was all consuming, and hands simply stood out.

Very few of the epic tales from Asian history could have been told without the aid of hand movement and gesture. In Kyrgyzstan, the epic poem of *Manas*, a biographical cycle of three generations of heroes, consists of many thousands of lines. The tale is generally sung without accompaniment, and the *Manaschi* (storyteller) I met near the southern city of Osh insisted that using his hands helped him to both memorise and explain the many intricate stories of social justice, traditions and homeland.

Clap hands, the world in our hands, all hands on deck; pick your own catchphrase. Hands are a welcome distraction. They are endlessly descriptive, symbolic and creative. They communicate passion, need, joy, faith, and a whole range of emotions that any observant individual or communicator cannot fail to notice. This distraction is both a blessing and a curse, and it is an affliction I hope never to be without – just so long as I can control it from time to time. ■

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Arncliffe, North Yorkshire, by John Potter

ACCESS RATING

These are based around an 'averagely fit' person. Below are loose guidelines to what the ratings mean (N.B. they are assigned by the author and not verified by OP. Walk distances are one-way only):



1/5 Easy access – you can pretty much get straight out of your car and quickly be at the viewpoint via good quality paths.



2/5 Some gentle walking – generally less than a half mile – is involved, which may be on mixed quality paths.



3/5 A walk of up to about two miles, over quite easy terrain.



4/5 Medium length hike – up to about four miles over mixed terrain, possibly with some quite steep gradients.



5/5 The most difficult access. Long hike over challenging terrain (e.g. mountains/summits/steep coastal terrain); or involves travelling over particularly extreme ground (e.g. scrambling on rocks/exposed coastal paths or mountain ridges) over any distance.

LOCATIONS GUIDE

48 Viewpoints of the month

- 1 Smirisary Highland
- 2 Bury Hill West Sussex

52 Viewpoints

- 3 Arncliffe North Yorkshire
- 4 Gortmore Viewing Point County Londonderry
- 5 Kinder Downfall Derbyshire
- 6 Stackpole Head Pembrokeshire
- 7 Carn Barra Cornwall
- 8 Catterline Bay Aberdeenshire
- 9 Cullernose Point Northumberland
- 10 Wittenham Clumps South Oxfordshire



Map plottings are approximate

Smirisary, Highland

Stopped in her tracks by spectacular light conditions, **Lizzie Shepherd** works quickly to capture the beauty of the scene before her, during a blustery trip to Scotland's remote west coast

A week in the western Highlands in early December and I was relishing the thought of sharp frosts, a smattering of snow and some proper winter scenery at last. Inevitably, when the time came, the sharp frosts were all down south while Scotland enjoyed a week of unseasonably mild weather! Not to worry; I was based on the shores of beautiful Loch Sunart, with easy access to two of Scotland's more remote and, dare I say, somewhat undervalued peninsulas: Moidart and Ardnamurchan.

Although the forecast suggested largely blanket grey skies for the week, I was treated to some wonderfully mixed conditions, with moments of magical light. None more so than when I explored the north-western tip of Moidart, near Glenuig. My plan was to find a spot with good views across to Eigg and the other Small Isles, but also where I could look south-west towards Ardnamurchan and the setting sun.

And so I found myself driving up to the tiny hamlet of Smirisary. From there I walked along a mixture of tracks and

footpaths until I reached the coast. The Ordnance Survey map shows the footpath ending at the furthestmost dwelling but, in reality, there are a number of little paths that follow the rocky shoreline southwards. Above me, the clouds were moving apace in the gusty winds and the light was getting better and better. Time to stop walking and start photographing!

I stopped near Smirisary Hill, overlooking a group of tiny islets, the largest of which is the diminutive Eilean Coille. In the distance, wonderfully moody clouds were skidding across the hills of Ardnamurchan, with intermittent breaks allowing shafts of crepuscular rays to beam down on to land and sea. It

really was a fabulous and dramatic sight – the sort of conditions in which it is very easy to go into headless chicken mode. As it was, I had to keep my wits about me and try and find ways to work round the gusting winds that make composing a sharp photograph somewhat challenging.

My 70-200mm f/4 VR lens is without doubt my most used lens – I love compressed landscapes. Perhaps it's just a phase I'm going through, but it is almost always my 'go to' lens. Although I prefer to use a tripod where possible, when using longer lenses in strong winds I find that I am better off raising the ISO and shooting handheld, bracing myself as best I can. In still conditions the VR is



36 miles from Fort William | 99 miles from Inverness | ACCESS RATING 

PLANNING YOUR TRIP



How to get there Take the A861 to Glenuig, then take the small road through the village of Glenuig and continue on for about one and a half miles until you reach Smirisary. There is an area where you can park near the end of the road. From here there is a track that leads towards the coast – this soon turns into a footpath and takes you up over the brow of a hill from where you can see the coast and further houses. A small path then takes you along the rocky shore, continuing beyond the viewpoint, should you wish.

What to shoot Views towards Ardnamurchan and Eilean Shona; views out to sea to the Small Isles; windswept birch trees; red deer; seaside rock

formations; sandy beach opposite Eilean Coille.

Best time of day As it is a west-facing location, afternoon to evening is best.

Nearest food/drink The Glenuig Inn, Glenuig, PH38 4NG, 01687 470219, glenuig.com.

Nearest accommodation The Glenuig Inn – as above.

Other times of year There are some lovely areas of woodland nearby, so autumn and spring are particularly promising, but any time of year has much to offer with such varied scenery.

Ordnance Survey map Landranger 40

Nearby locations Castle Tioram (12 miles); Salen (15 miles).



incredibly effective, but with a gusting wind I opt for conservative shutter speeds – I'd far rather a bit of noise than a blurred image.

A further challenge came from overly bright patches of sky where the clouds had parted, allowing the full strength of the low sun to shine through. It's very much an individual choice, but I do not like large areas of blown highlights in my images, as natural as this might be

when there is such a strong source of light. As always, it's about working with the conditions to get the results you are after. Here, in the main image, I opted to zoom in to 200mm, deliberately excluding the nearby islets and any other 'distractions' to create a simplified presentation of a magical scene.

I spent a mesmerising half hour watching and photographing as the light and colours became increasingly

dramatic. Yet, as is so often the case, I found myself drawn to the more muted tones of the earlier and later images from that afternoon. As the sun fell below the horizon, so the wind also abated and I was thankful to be able to get the tripod out and capture a long exposure of the gorgeous view across the sea to the immaculately formed island of Eigg. The light was rapidly fading, so I returned to the car, feeling very content. ■



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Bury Hill, West Sussex

Inspired by the promise of early morning mist, **Sean Lewis** heads to one of his favourite local spots to capture a stunning South Downs vista with the rising sun beyond

Nikon D800 with 24-70mm lens at 58mm and 1.4x teleconverter, ISO 100, 1/3sec at f/11, 1.2 ND grad, cable release, tripod

Overlooking the Arun Valley in the West Sussex stretch of the South Downs National Park is the wonderful Bury Hill. Its familiar landmark, an old, dead tree, is visible from the A29. Being only three miles from home, the area is my first port of call when morning mist is forecast. The vista south and east of the hill commands views over Amberley and the River Arun and across the valley that meanders through the hills to Arundel. The South Downs Way ascends Bury Hill from Houghton on its way west to Bignor Hill and beyond.

On a fine December morning, the drive to Bury Hill was filled with promise, as the air was cold and still. The forecast had predicted a temperature inversion, and the conditions were just right. As I approached the edge of the hill, the view opened up before me and the lowlands and valleys were filled with a very generous helping of mist. I parked up where the South Downs Way crosses the road and walked down the path to a spot where the dead tree stands in the foreground, backed by the view south-east across the valley.

With the tree being some distance from the path, I quickly decided that the scene called for a telephoto shot. The mist in the valley beyond was



swirling along the contours of the hillside, revealing and concealing a wonderfully wintery landscape. At the time, my 24-70mm lens with 1.4x teleconverter gave me my longest focal length, so I set up my tripod in the field next to the path and attached these to my camera along with a ND grad to bring down the brightness of the sky.

After I'd taken a few shots of the scene with varying amounts of mist, the sun appeared above the horizon. I watched in awe as the colours changed from the cold blue of night to the warm hues of daylight. I then quickly altered my position to compose a balanced image, using the tree and the sun as the main focal points. ■

4.5 miles from Arundel | 12 miles from Chichester | ACCESS RATING     

PLANNING YOUR TRIP



How to get there From the Fontwell roundabout on the A27, take the A29 towards Pulborough. After about four miles, take the first exit at the Whiteways roundabout. Drive for half a mile, then pull into the small layby on top of Bury Hill, by the sign for the South Downs Way, and walk down the path or along the roadside for the view.

What to shoot The lone, dead tree and views across the South Downs.

Best time of day Dawn to mid-morning, as this part of the hill faces south-east.

Nearest food/drink The Squire and Horses, Bury Common, Bury, RH20 1NS, 01798 831343, squireandhorsebury.co.uk.

Nearest accommodation Harkway B&B, 8 Houghton Lane, Bury, RH20 1PD, 01798 831843, harkaway.freeuk.com.

Other times of year Summer for wildflowers, rape and wheat fields.

Ordnance Survey map Explorer 121

Nearby locations Waltham Brooks (3 miles); West Wittering (20 miles).

15 miles from Skipton | 41 miles from Leeds | ACCESS RATING 

Arncliffe, North Yorkshire

This beautiful tree sits high up on a limestone crag above the pretty village of Arncliffe in Lower Liffordale, in the Yorkshire Dales. During the months of November through to January the sun rises at the southern end of the dale, directly behind the tree. Often the tree is silhouetted against a dramatic dawn sky, and the drystone walls and trees in the valley bottom are sharply defined as they cast long shadows across the fields.

How to get there Drive north from Skipton on the B6160 into Wharfedale, past the Devonshire Arms. Carry on past Grassington and Kilnsey Crag, then turn left into Liffordale, just a couple of miles south of Kettlewell. Follow the narrow road for approximately three miles, then at Arncliffe turn left (straight on) through the village green. Park beyond the village,



just after crossing a small stone arched bridge. The tree is one mile east of the village on the fell top path to Kettlewell. Allow about 45 minutes to walk from the village, as the path is very steep.

What to shoot Aside from the tree, subjects to photograph include limestone scars, drystone walls and field systems. There's also the village with its stone cottages and croft plots. St Oswald's Church is superb, too, and surrounded by snowdrops in February.

Best time of day From 30 minutes

before sunrise to two hours after sunrise.

Nearest food/drink The Falcon Inn, Arncliffe, Skipton, BD23 5QE, 01756 770205, thefalconinn.com.

Nearest accommodation The Falcon Inn – as above.

Other times of year This location offers great potential throughout the year; the key thing is to be there at sunrise and during the first couple of hours of daylight.

Ordnance Survey map OL 30

Nearby locations Kilnsey Park Estate (4 miles); Kettlewell village (5.5 miles).



© John Potter

6 miles from Castlerock | 21 miles from Londonderry | ACCESS RATING 

Gortmore Viewing Point, County Londonderry

Situated on the Binevenagh Scenic Loop, part of the Causeway Coastal Route, Gortmore Viewing Point offers views across to Donegal and beyond. A life-size sculpture of legendary sea god Manannán Mac Lir can be seen from here; some locals still believe his spirit is released during fierce storms off Ireland's scenic north coast. In ancient times, votive offerings were made to appease his anger; perhaps I should have offered something on this stormy winter's day to help my tripod stand up!



© David Kirkpatrick

How to get there Castlerock is the closest town to the viewpoint; follow Mussendun Road (A2), signposted Causeway Coastal Route. When you descend into Downhill, turn left on to Bishop's Road as it rises steeply. Look for the brown and white signs for Binevenagh Scenic Loop and Gortmore. The viewpoint is approximately two and a half miles along this small road.

What to shoot The life-size sculpture overlooks Lough Foyle, from where much of the Causeway Coast can be viewed.

Best time of day Any time of day can be good, especially for black & white work.

Nearest food/drink Castlerock has a number of pubs and shops.

Nearest accommodation Glen Lodge B&B, 93a Frosses Road, Ballymoney, BT53 7EJ, 02827 663800, glen-lodge.co.uk.

Other times of year Any time of year.

Ordnance Survey map Coleraine Discoverer 4

Nearby locations Dunluce Castle (16 miles); the Giant's Causeway (18 miles).



© James Grant

Kinder Downfall, Derbyshire

At 30m, Kinder Downfall is the highest waterfall in the Peak District. On days with south-westerly winds, the waterfall blows back on itself. It's a long walk in, but offers up stunning views down to Kinder Reservoir below.

How to get there The best place to park is at Bowden Bridge; you can then follow the path up via Kinder Low and join the Pennine Way. The walk is roughly three and a half miles.

What to shoot Dramatic views down the hillside, and the waterfall – especially when it's blowing back on itself.



Best time of day Sunset is best; aim for a day when there's a south-westerly wind.

Nearest food/drink The Sportsman, Kinder Road, Hayfield, SK22 2LE, 01663 741565, kindersportsman.co.uk.

Nearest accommodation The Bridge End, 7 Church Street, Hayfield, SK22 2JE, 01663 749888.

Other times of year Keep an eye on the

sun position to catch the golden hour. November and December work well, as it's in a cove, but any day where the sun is in a south-westerly position can work well, especially in overcast conditions.

Ordnance Survey map OL 1

Nearby locations The Woolpacks on Kinder Scout (5 miles); Mam Tor (15 miles).

5 miles from Glossop | 18 miles from Manchester | ACCESS RATING

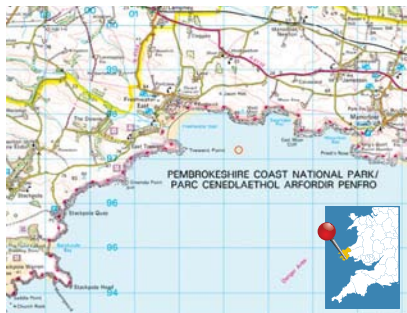
6 miles from Tenby | 56 miles from Swansea | ACCESS RATING

Stackpole Head, Pembrokeshire

Shot from Manorbier, one of Pembrokeshire's most stunning beaches, this small rocky cove with a stretch of golden sand is backed by dunes covered by marram grass. As shown here, it's also a great viewpoint towards the many other bays and headlands along the south Pembrokeshire coastline.

How to get there From Tenby, head west for four and a half miles on the A4139, then turn left on to the B4585 and follow signs to Manorbier beach.

What to shoot Long exposure coastal



© Drew Buckley

scenes, rockpools, grassy sand dunes, rugged coastline and cliffs.

Best time of day Side-lit cliffs at sunrise, abstracts in cloudy weather or in the middle of the day. Westerly views are great for sunsets.

Nearest food/drink Castlemead, Manorbier, SA70 7TA, 01834 871358, castlemeadhotel.com.

Nearest accommodation Tudor Lodge,

Jameston, Near Manorbier, Tenby, SA70 7SS, 01834 871212, tudorlodgejameston.co.uk.

Other times of year All year round, but during autumn and winter months the sun sets right over the bay. It's also a great place for winter storms and waves.

Ordnance Survey map OL 36

Nearby locations Freshwater East (4 miles); Stackpole Quay (6 miles).





© David Chapman

Carn Barra, Cornwall

The coast path between Gwennap Head and Nanjizal is at the most south-westerly point in Britain. The headlands, which are interspersed with more sheltered coves, are made of rugged granite, which has been sculpted into dramatic shapes by wind and rain, making for some great photography.

How to get there From Land's End, take the B3315 towards Porthcurno; in Polgigga, turn right to Porthgwarra and park at the end of the road, in a pay and display car park. Continue on foot along the same small road (turn right out of car

park) to the coastguard houses and then follow the coast path north until you reach Carn Barra.

What to shoot Big waves sweeping in and breaking in the bay; granite shapes; storms; Longships lighthouse.

Best time of day Any time, except probably sunrise.

Nearest food/drink First and Last Inn, Sennen, TR19 7AD, 01736 871680,

firstandlastinn.co.uk.

Nearest accommodation Rafta Cottage (B&B and self-catering), St Levan, TR19 6JZ, 01736 871324, raftacottage.co.uk.

Other times of year August is good for heathland flowers on top of the cliffs.

Ordnance Survey map Explorer 102

Nearby locations Porthcurno (3 miles); Land's End (4 miles).



10 miles from Penzance | 37 miles from Truro | ACCESS RATING

6 miles from Stonehaven | 21 miles from Aberdeen | ACCESS RATING

Catterline Bay, Aberdeenshire

Catterline Bay is situated on Scotland's North Sea coast, south of Aberdeen and Stonehaven. The bay is famous for its colourful pebbles and rock stacks. This east-facing location is particularly interesting at sunrise, but the bay looks good at any time of day.

How to get there From Aberdeen, take the A90 towards Stonehaven. After passing Stonehaven, take the A92 and carry on for another three miles until you reach Mill of Uras. Turn left, following signs to Catterline, and continue for one and a half miles until you reach Catterline village. From here, follow the road into

a harbour, where there is small car park.

What to shoot Colourful pebbles on the beach, long exposures of the sea with rock stacks, birds.

Best time of day Sunrise, as the sun rises over the water; any time of day for abstracts and long exposures.

Nearest food/drink Creel Inn, Catterline, AB39 2UL, 01569 750254, thecreelinn.co.uk.

Nearest accommodation Northend Cottage, 19 Northend, Catterline, AB39 2UL, 07710 833087, northend-cottage.com.

Other times of year Any season can be good at this location.

Ordnance Survey map LR 45

Nearby locations Dunnotar Castle (4 miles); Fowlsheugh Nature Reserve (6 miles).



© Izabela Janusz



Cullernose Point, Northumberland

A way from the obvious castles in Northumberland, the coastline also has some dramatic and photogenic areas, made up of rock forms and crumbling cliffsides jutting out into the sea. These make ideal subjects for long exposures and colourful shots taken at sunrise, as the coastline faces east.

How to get there Leave the A1 at Alnwick and take the B1340 towards Seahouses. After two miles, take the right fork, signposted Dunstanburgh



Castle. Cross the B1339 and then turn right at the T-junction, signposted to Lesbury. After one mile you will see a layby on your left, where the coastal path joins.

What to shoot The view looking east at sunrise. The main large cliff jutting out is Cullernose Point, and you can shoot this with the boulders in the foreground, or focus on the rocks using a long exposure.

Best time of day Sunrise to catch the first rays, and low tide to reveal the rocks that are usually hidden beneath the sea.

Nearest food/drink Jolly Fisherman Inn, Haven Hill, Craster, NE66 3TR, 01665 576461, thejollyfishermancraster.co.uk.

Nearest accommodation The Old Rectory, Howick, Craster, NE66 3LE, 01665 577590, oldrectoryhowick.co.uk.

Other times of year In June and July, the sun rises beyond Cullernose Point.

Ordnance Survey map LR 81

Nearby locations Dunstanburgh Castle (4 miles); Alnmouth (7 miles).



© Craig Roberts

1.5 miles from Craster | 7 miles from Alnwick | ACCESS RATING

5 miles from Didcot | 10 miles from Oxford | ACCESS RATING

Wittenham Clumps, South Oxfordshire

The jewel in the crown of South Oxfordshire, Wittenham Clumps comprises two hills, which, although not of great height, dominate the low-lying surrounding countryside. Managed by Earth Trust, this historic and diverse site gives superb views and adjoins Little Wittenham Wood to provide plenty of photographic opportunities all year round. You can find out more about the location at earthtrust.org.uk.

How to get there From Didcot, take the A4130 east towards Wallingford. After four miles turn right on to the B4016 (Sires Hill). After half a mile, turn left on to a single track road marked with a brown Earth Trust sign. Shortly you will come across a free public car park for Wittenham Clumps. If you carry on along



© Andy Hough

the road you will come to Earth Trust's main car park; a 24-hour car park is located further down the road.

What to shoot Dramatic sunrises and sunsets, sweeping broad landscapes, arboreal delights in Little Wittenham Wood, birds of prey including red kites.

Best time of day Sunrise is my favourite time to catch low-lying mist over the countryside, but sunset is also a treat.

Nearest food/drink This is a rural location, but there are family pubs in the nearby villages of Long Wittenham and Clifton Hampton.

Nearest accommodation The Grange B&B, Long Wittenham, OX14 4QH, 01865 407808, grangebb.com.

Other times of year Autumnal colours grace the trees that adorn the hilltops, making this a special time of year.

Ordnance Survey map LR 164

Nearby locations Wallingford (4 miles); Lardon Chase (9 miles).

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READER GALLERY

Each issue, we feature the very best images from all those submitted for Reader Gallery. To find out how to send your images, turn to page 80. This month's winner is...



Robert Howell

I would describe my personal style as contemporary. I like to use super-wideangle lenses to exaggerate perspective along with ND filters to achieve longer exposures. My post-processing is fairly minimal; I aim to get the shot right in-camera.

I got into photography as a result of being surrounded by beautiful landscapes at home on the Gower Peninsula and while climbing and mountaineering throughout Europe. The drive to start photographing landscapes properly prompted me to buy my first DSLR about seven years ago.

My ambitions are to make a full-time living out of my photography and to travel further

afield with my camera. One of my dreams is to walk the length of Wales over four weeks and produce a coffee-table book with the results.

This year I've been part of the Open Up North art exhibition held at the Brewery Arts Centre in Kendal. In June I got the cover and a four-page article in *Amateur Photographer* magazine. A couple of months ago I became one of filter manufacturer Formatt-Hitech's featured artists, and I'm now a permanent tenant at Joe Cornish's gallery in Northallerton. I have also recently exhibited work in Youdells art gallery in Kendal and Stiles Coffee Bar in Ambleside. It's been a great year!



Hometown Gower, Swansea
Occupation Firefighter
Photographic experience
Seven years

roberthowellphotography.co.uk

Landscape of Heaven: it had been raining in the Lake District solidly for two weeks when the clouds finally broke. The photograph was taken early one morning, looking down into Grasmere from the top of Dunmail Raise.

Canon EOS 60D with Tamron 70-300mm lens, ISO 100, 1/750sec at f/11, handheld



WHY WE LOVE THEM...

Successful landscape images very much rely on extraordinary light. That's not to say the light has to be dramatic, the right subtle light conditions can be just as evocative. Robert's images show perfectly how those opposing situations can both produce photography that moves the viewer. The image taken from Dunmail Raise oozes serenity, with the mist lapping through the trees at the bottom of the slope. The wonderful detail is brought to the fore by the diffused lighting. The contrast with the Kentmere image is stark, but this image also touches the emotions, with the crepuscular rays spotlighting the verdant landscape below. Two very different photographs, but both equally glorious.

Kentmere Sunburst: this image was taken while out walking the Kentmere Horseshoe in Cumbria with my girlfriend in autumn. The sunburst lasted only seconds, illuminating the village down in the valley below. *Canon EOS 60D with Sigma 17-50mm f/2.8, ISO 160, 1/125sec at f/16, handheld*

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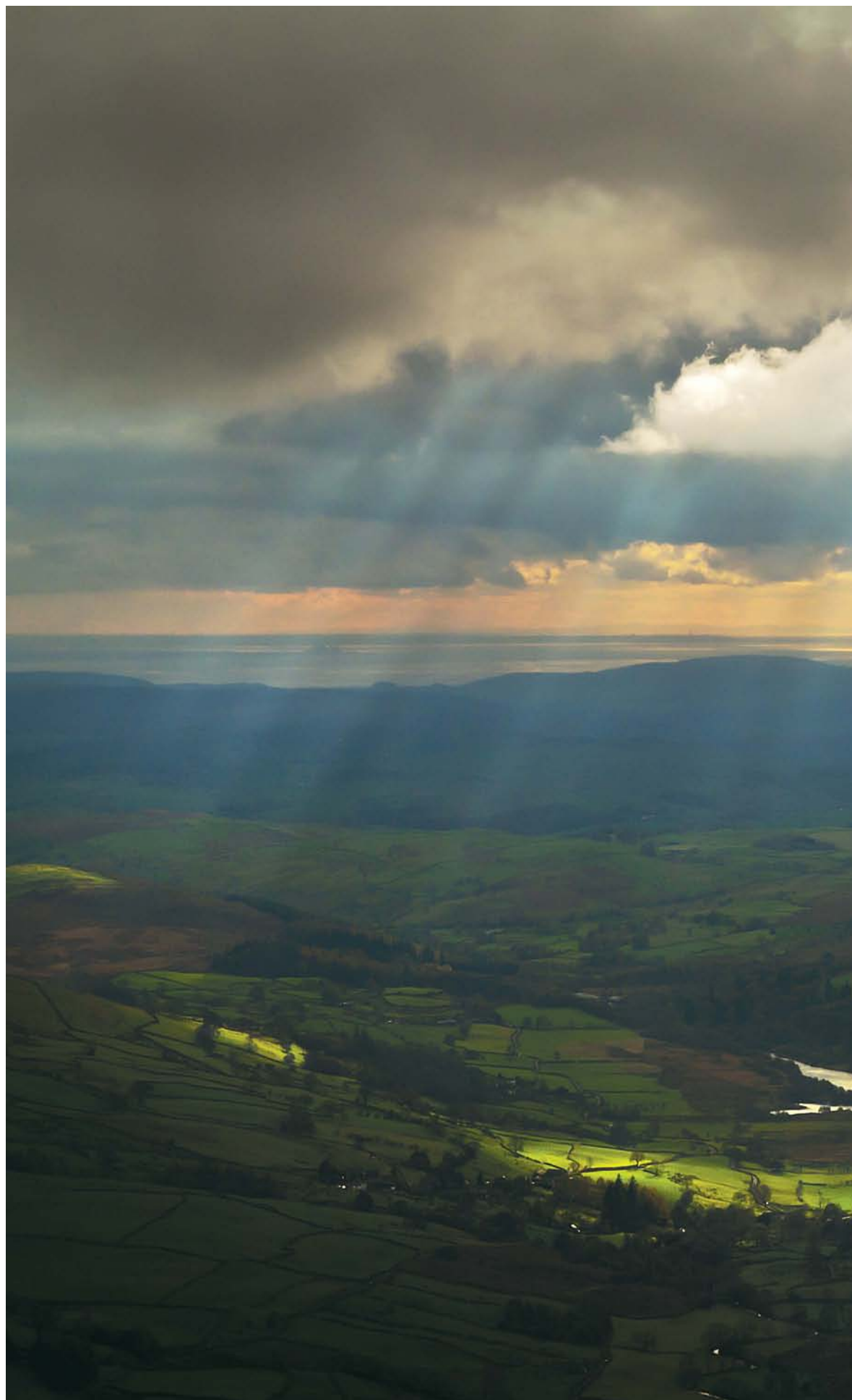
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IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Richard Slater

London-based photographer Richard Slater has spent the past five years working on his social documentary, *People in London*. But he's also a dedicated exponent of classic travel photography. Nick Smith finds out more about his working methods



above The weekly market in Kashgar, Xinjiang province, China.

NICK SMITH What got you started in outdoor photography?

RICHARD SLATER I've not been in the business very long at all. I only started as a professional about eight or nine years ago. Before that I was a partner in a City law firm. I loved my career, but before I got too old and ran out of energy I wanted to have a crack at doing something completely different.

NS Have you always been a traveller, or is that new too?

RS I lived in Hong Kong in the early 1980s and had the opportunity to travel to some amazing places in Asia, and right away I thought that I wanted to take photographs. I started taking pictures in that region in my spare time, purely on an amateur hobby basis. But the places I was going to were so beautiful it was hard not to take good photographs.

NS Tell me how the *People in London* project came about...

RS When I gave up the law I had various ideas about what I might pursue in photography. This project came about from my great love of London. I was born there and, apart from a stint in the Far East, I've lived there all my life. I thought that most of the photography of London seemed to be about buildings, landscapes and what tourists like, and that not much of it was about the people. So I compiled a vague list of ideas and worked out a structure and a set of themes.



NS It's a gritty project compared with your classic travel work?

RS Getting under the skin of London is a product of simply having lived here for so long, and of course a huge amount of hard work, research and thought was involved. There were a lot of phone calls and meetings, trying to get access to some of the subject material. I didn't want to just look at social groupings such as Harley-Davidson owners and charity events – I also wanted to capture the social scale, from Royal Ascot to homeless people.

NS But you also take very beautiful photographs...

RS You can be the sort of photographer who does both, if you get used to framing scenes and people in your mind, thinking about what the photo is going to look like. You can use that facility not just in social documentary, but in all genres of photography. Whether you're in Deptford or Burma, the crucial point is to engage people, find out a bit about them. It makes all the difference when people relax, because that's when you can take a lot of photographs and then work with the best ones.

NS How important is your preparation?

RS I shoot a lot of religious and cultural ceremonies and events, whether that's in London or on the other side of the world. For me it is critical to understand what these occasions mean both to the people involved and to me as a photographer. Knowing what it is you are shooting means you'll get into better positions



and know what's important and what isn't. It's important to me not to be boring, and preparation is the key here.

NS You haven't mentioned equipment yet...

RS I'm not a techie person. My view is that these days the best cameras can do an enormous amount of the work for you. With documentary photography you're working in split seconds and there's not much time to think about manual settings. I tend to do as much on automatic as I reasonably can. I concentrate on being at the right event on the right day, and in the right place. ■

RICHARD'S TOP TIPS

- » **One thing I never go on a shoot without is...** doing a great deal of research, so that I can have a clear understanding of what's going on.
- » **My one piece of advice would be to...** think about why you are taking the photograph and what the viewer is going to experience from the photo.
- » **Something I try to avoid is...** getting too bogged down with the technicalities of photography.

above Train cemetery near Uyuni, Bolivia.

top left East London mosque; Friday prayers, UK.

top right Namib-Naukluft National Park at sunset, Namibia.

RICHARD'S CRITICAL MOMENTS

1971 First camera (point and shoot) and first visit to Africa.

1981 Arrived to live in Hong Kong and bought first serious kit.

2005 Started photography business.

2007 Came up with idea of People in London project.

2008 RGS agreed to work with me on People in London project.

2014 People in London exhibition opened at RGS and book published.

To see more of Richard's work visit photographyrs.com

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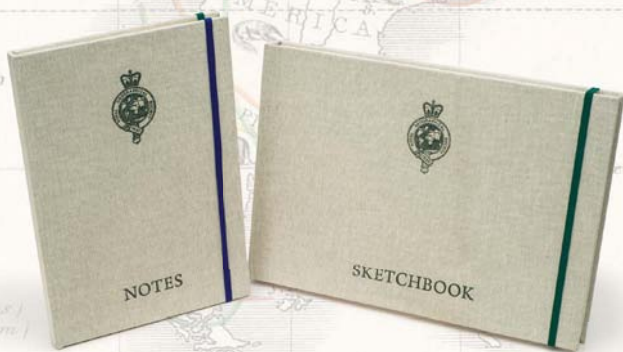
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REINDEER: NO SNOW REQUIRED

Laurie Campbell recommends a fresh way to photograph reindeer

WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR 2014

Celebrating its 50th anniversary, Wildlife Photographer of the Year continues to be the pre-eminent competition around the globe for wildlife photographers. This year, once again, it has produced a stunning set of images, and these are just a handful of our favourites...



Earth's Environments – Winner

Francisco Negroni, Chile

Apocalypse

Straight after the Puyehue-Cordón Caulle volcanic complex began erupting, Francisco travelled to southern Chile,

anticipating a spectacular light show. But what he witnessed was more like an apocalypse. From his viewpoint – a hill quite a distance to the west of the volcano – he watched, awestruck, as flashes of lightning lacerated the sky, and the glow from the molten lava lit up the smoke billowing upwards and

illuminated the landscape. 'It was the most incredible thing I have seen in my life.' Volcanic lightning is a rare, short-lived phenomenon probably caused by the static electrical charges resulting from the crashing together of fragments of red-hot rock, ash and vapour high in the volcanic plume.



World in our Hands – Winner

Bruno D'Amicis, Italy

The price they pay

A teenager from a village in southern Tunisia offers to sell a three-month old fennec fox, one of a litter of pups he dug out of their den in the Sahara Desert. Catching or killing wild fennec foxes is illegal in Tunisia but widespread, which

Bruno discovered as part of a long-term project to investigate the issues facing endangered species in the Sahara. He gained the confidence of villagers in Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco and discovered widespread wildlife exploitation, including hunting and capture for commercial trade and traditional medicine. He also discovered that the causes and therefore the solutions are complex and include high

unemployment, poor education, lack of enforcement of conservation laws, ignorant tourists and tour companies, habitat destruction and the socio-political legacy of the Arab Spring revolts. But Bruno is convinced that change is possible – that tourism has a part to play and that thought-provoking images can help raise awareness among tourists as well as highlight what's happening to this fragile environment.



11 to 14 Years – Finalist

Will Jenkins, United Kingdom

Green dragon

Relaxing by the hotel at the end of a family holiday in Costa Rica, Will was planning on a day hanging out by the pool and surfing – that was until the green iguana jumped down from the hotel roof. Will grabbed his camera. 'I love stories about dragons, and I wanted a big picture for my wall that would make me smile every day,' he says. 'I also wanted to impress my dad and brother with a shot of the biggest iguana I'd ever seen.' The metre-long lizard made its way to the top of a rock. Will edged closer. 'I tried to keep in the shadows, hiding behind one sunbed and then the next, so as not to scare it. It made me realise that you should always have your camera with you.'





**Black & White – Winner
and Wildlife Photographer
of the Year 2014**

Michael ‘Nick’ Nichols, USA

The last great picture

Nick set out to create an archetypal image that would express both the essence of lions and how we visualise them – a picture of a time past, before lions were under such threat. Here, the five females of the Vumbi pride – a ‘formidable and spectacularly co-operative team’ – lie at rest with their cubs on a *kopje* (a rocky outcrop), in Tanzania’s Serengeti National Park. Shortly before he took the shot, they had attacked and driven off one of the pride’s two males. Now they were lying close together, calmly sleeping. They were used to Nick’s presence – he’d been following them for nearly six months – which meant he could position his vehicle close to the *kopje*. Making use of a specially made hole in the roof, he slowly stood up to frame the vista, with the Serengeti plains beyond and the dramatic late-afternoon sky above. He photographed them in infrared, which he says, ‘cuts through the dust and haze, transforms the light and turns the moment into something primal, biblical almost’. The chosen picture – and Nick believes that the creation of a picture is as much in the choice as the taking – speaks about lions in Africa, part flashback, part fantasy. Nick got to know and love the Vumbi pride. A few months later, he heard that it had ventured into land beyond the park and that three females had been killed.



Birds – Finalist

Jan van der Greef, The Netherlands

Touché

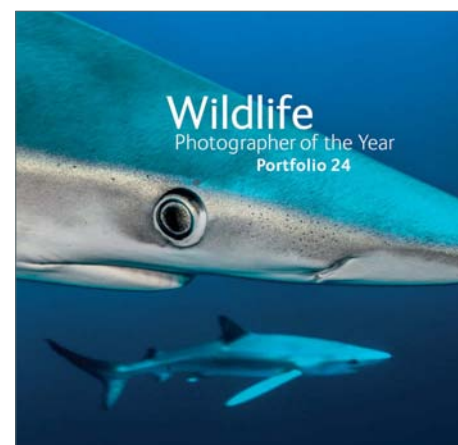
A focus of Jan's trip to Ecuador was the astonishing sword-billed hummingbird – the only bird with a bill longer than its body (excluding its tail). Its 11-centimetre bill is designed to reach nectar at the base of equally long tube-shaped flowers, but Jan discovered that it can have another use. One particular bird had a regular circuit through the forest, mapped out by its favourite red angel trumpet flowers and birdfeeders near Jan's lodge. To get to the bird feeders, it had to cross the territory of a fiercely territorial collared inca. Rather than being scared off, once or twice a day 'it used its bill to make a statement'. To capture one of these stand-offs, Jan set up multiple flashes to freeze the hummingbirds' wing beats – more than 60 a second – and finally captured the precise colourful moment.

GET THE BOOK AND SEE THE EXHIBITION

The *Wildlife Photographer of the Year Portfolio 24* book is available now and costs £25 (ISBN 9780565093426, published by the Natural History Museum).

The exhibition of the winning and selected images is on at the Natural History Museum, London until 30 August 2015. For more information and to buy tickets go to nhm.ac.uk/visit-us/wpy.

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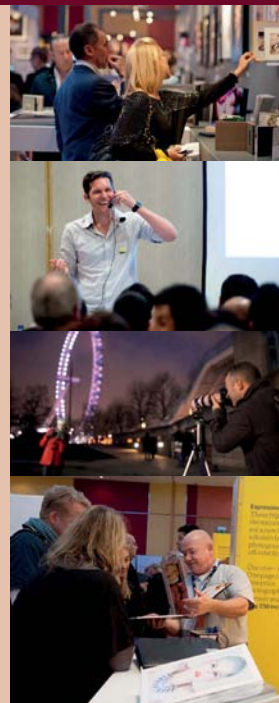
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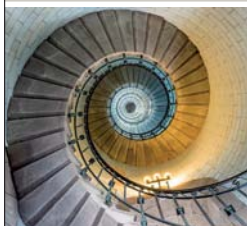
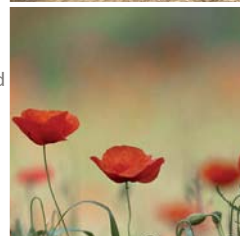
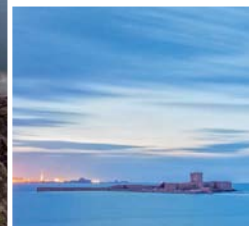
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Life in the Wild

Setting out with an open mind when photographing nature can allow you to take advantage of unexpected opportunities, as Laurie Campbell was reminded during a recent trip

Not an underwater image, but photographed through the side of a glass tank that I was using to 'bale' many hundreds of young herring left stranded in the rockpools to return them to the sea.

Nikon D4 with Nikon 60mm f/2.8 macro lens, ISO 1250, 1/500sec at f/13, handheld

So once again we have reached that time of year when many of us take a retrospective look over what we have photographed over the past year and plan for the next. Looking over the ever-growing collection of unprocessed Raw files in need of editing, I'm reminded of a memorable day from a trip my wife Margaret and I made to Sutherland in early August. After a relatively frustrating spring and early summer, where work pressures had conspired to keep me indoors, I was ready for a break away. So, I headed up north with a completely open mind about what I might end up photographing. This may seem like a very haphazard way of working, but even when I do set out with goal to photograph a particular subject, I'm easily distracted. It just seems a waste not to take advantage of any chance I get to photograph a subject I've never covered. And for subjects I've already photographed, I'll use any opportunity to get better shots. After all, with photography there is always room for improvement, and I've never shot a single image that I can't find fault with after having lived with it for a while.



We started our trip with a brief visit to check for salmon leaping at the Falls of Shin by Lairg, and then set off north on the A836, having decided to travel in an anti-clockwise direction around the coast. Along the way we paused at all the usual 'tourist stops', starting with the Kyle of Tongue and then on to Loch Eriboll and Smoo Cave by Durness. Being late in the season, there were few flowering plants, so I was mostly shooting landscapes, birds and, when

they ventured down to the bottoms of the glens at dusk, red deer.

After a few days we took a short detour to Kinlochbervie, mainly to stop for supplies. It was close to lunchtime when we parked the camper by the harbour to put our groceries away and put the kettle on. Looking outside, I noticed a great skua harrying a kittiwake to drop its prey, and an elderly gentleman hurriedly setting up his fishing rod. Stepping outside to investigate, I quickly saw how



The sandy bottom in a shallow part of the harbour provided sufficient contrast to show the outlines of the young herring when the edge of a shoal passed over it.

Nikon D4 with Nikon 500mm f/4 VR lens, ISO 1250, 1/500sec at f/7.1, polariser, handheld



I used a polariser to reduce surface glare on the water when photographing this dense shoal of young herring. The pale, barnacle-encrusted rock just beneath the surface added contrast.

Nikon D4 with Nikon 200mm f/2 VR lens, ISO 1000, 1/800sec at f/9, polariser, handheld

a large area of the surface of the water in the bay was alive and 'boiling' with small fish. This turned out to be a vast shoal of young herring – and they were being predated by kittiwakes, herring gulls, lesser-black-backed gulls and grey and common seals. Closer inspection revealed mackerel scything through the shoal to gorge on the herring, causing them to panic and shed tiny scales. Suspended in the water column and contrasting against the dark waters of the harbour, they glinted like mica in the sunlight. At one point the herrings were pressed against the harbour wall to such an extent that those on top of the shoal were forced above the surface to momentarily settle on the exposed seaweed growing on the wall as the tide ebbed.

Later, and at low tide, many thousands of young herring were left stranded in the rockpools, and sections of the beach were coated with millions of tiny fish scales. After almost seven hours, we finally departed. Margaret knew better than to ask how long we might stay when we stopped for lunch that day. ■



This photograph shows the young herring breaking the surface of the water to try to escape the mackerel – only to be brought into range of the surface-feeding kittiwakes.

Nikon D4 with Nikon 500mm f/4 VR lens, ISO 640, 1/2000sec at f/9, handheld



Despite crash-diving into a dense shoal of young herring, this kittiwake failed to catch one.

Nikon D4 with Nikon 500mm f/4 VR lens, ISO 1000, 1/2000sec at f/8, handheld



A group of kittiwakes dive and snatch young herring from the sea.

Nikon D4 with Nikon 500mm f/4 VR lens and 1.4x teleconverter, ISO 800, 1/1250sec at f/9, handheld

LAURIE'S FACTFILE

Taking advantage of the unexpected

Few things we set out to photograph in nature turn out as expected. Although there is a certain sense of anticipation and excitement that something unpredictable may happen, recognising the photographic potential of any situation as it develops requires an open mind. It's necessary to be receptive to the idea of photographing just about anything we come across outdoors in nature. Going out only to photograph a specific species, particularly of animals, can mean that you may return empty-handed, but then few of us succeed first time round, and persistence usually pays off.

As I've stated before in this column, taking a wide interest in many aspects of the natural world will help you gain a better understanding of how whole habitats work; it is this that will lead you to being better prepared to anticipate opportunities for photography. And in an age where many species seem to have been comprehensively photographed, individually at least, then you are better able to identify connections in nature between

species. This can enable you to shoot sequences of related images that tell a story.

Working out what equipment to carry in order to be prepared to photograph just about anything in the field can be tricky. Perhaps it's worth taking advice from the North American nature photographer John Shaw. He wrote that he was once asked which lens was best for photographing close-ups of plants, and he simply answered: 'any lens you already have fitted to your camera should be fine'. So it's as much about how you can think of getting the best from the kit you already have, rather than wishing for anything else.

Making a decision about where to start or which location to visit seems difficult, but then it should be apparent by now that just about anywhere will do. Indeed, the older I get the more I see opportunities for photographing nature in any location. Try restricting yourself to working in just one small area that you can access easily and repeatedly visit; this will force you to look carefully.

What to shoot this month...

Laurie's December highlights



▲ The tops of the hills in the Cairngorms in the Scottish Highlands are very likely to have a covering of snow at this time of year. On the lower slopes, however, where the Cairngorm Reindeer Company has a herd of reintroduced **reindeer** (*Rangifer tarandus*), there is still the possibility that it will be much milder, and even grey and rainy. But don't let the weather discourage you from signing up for one of the guided tours; reindeer are hardy animals, and it is just as appropriate to photograph them in rain as well as snow.
Nikon F3 with Nikon 300mm f/2.8 AF lens, Kodachrome ISO 64, 1/125sec at f/4, tripod



▲ The upper branches of **beech trees** (*Fagus sylvatica*) end in fine twigs and, in snowy or freezing foggy conditions, they conjure up a delicate feathered appearance. The effect occurs once a coating of ice crystals has formed, or after dry snow has settled. On mature trees these formations high up in the crown are obviously out of reach for short focal length lenses, so long lenses of 300mm or greater are better for isolating sections of the tree.
Nikon F4S with Nikon 200-400mm f/4 manual focus lens, Fuji Provia ISO 100, 1/8sec at f/16, cable release, mirror-lock, tripod



◀ Although the leaves of **ash trees** (*Fraxinus excelsior*) have long gone, the bare trunks with their distinctive, furrowed pattern provide scope for fairly dramatic images when photographed from a low angle with a wide lens against a clear blue winter sky. I suspect that many readers will have heard about the crisis facing our ash trees, caused by *Chalara fraxinea*, otherwise known as ash dieback disease. Any losses of these beautiful trees would be a tragedy.
Nikon F4S with Nikon 20mm f/2.8 manual focus lens, Fuji Velvia ISO 50, 1/30sec at f/16, polariser, cable release, tripod

▲ The massed winter flocks of **wading birds** gathered on the seashore at high-tide roosting sites are especially vulnerable to disturbance. There are occasions, however, when exceptionally high tides flood the roost sites and leave the birds no option but to take to the air. Single-spot autofocus isn't ideal because there is a risk that it will lock on to a single bird deep in the flock, rendering those on the outer edge nearest the camera out of focus.
Nikon D2X with Nikon 500mm f/4 AFS lens, ISO 200, 1/600sec at f/6.3, handheld



NATURE WALK OF THE MONTH

Attenborough Nature Reserve, Nottinghamshire

Opened by Sir David Attenborough in 1966, this beautiful reserve is located just six miles south-west of Nottingham city centre. A complex of flooded former gravel pits, it is a haven for birds, especially ducks, geese and swans. There's a well-maintained network of paths with a number of hides along the way, and it takes two to three hours to walk the full circuit. In winter, there are significant numbers of shoveler, goosander, wigeon and pochard, along with goldeneye, teal and the occasional smew. There are also regularly sightings of scarcer wildfowl, such as sawbills and sea ducks. At this time of year, drakes are resplendent in their brightest plumage, and birds arrive from the continent, boosting numbers. Other species of interest include great crested grebes, kingfishers, cormorants and winter thrushes such as redwing and fieldfare. At the end of your walk you can reward yourself with a hot drink and a snack in the eco-friendly Nature Centre, which offers views of the reserve's lakes and islands.



Quick facts

Distance 4 miles
Time 2-3 hours
Ordnance Survey map Explorer 260
Website attenboroughnaturecentre.co.uk

More seasonal subjects...

Flora

Ivy (*Hedera helix*) – the lower sections of the large stems of ivy are usually free from leaves, so look out for any of the twisted shapes they form around trees.

Greater reedgrass (*Typha latifolia*) – the sword-like shapes of the dead leaves of this plant become more defined if coated with frost.

Common polypody fern (*Polypodium vulgare*) – this species forms epiphytic growths of plant communities on the sides of trees in the Atlantic oakwoods.

Fauna

Cuttlefish (*Sepia spp*) – mass strandings of the remains of this fish – in the form of elliptical, flat bones – come ashore on beaches.

Bank voles (*Clethrionomys glareolus*) – found in most gardens, they can be easily attracted with peanut butter or sliced apple.

Otters (*Lutra lutra*) – easier to see in winter against snow or when moving across frozen lakes in search of ice-free water.

WORLD WILDLIFE SPECTACLES



Markhor antelopes, Pakistan

Measuring up to six feet in length and with corkscrew-shaped horns, markhors are one of the largest and most

imposing species of goat. Despite their size, they are incredibly agile climbers, and they favour the rugged mountainous regions of central and southern Asia. Largely found in northern areas of Pakistan, they spend the summer at altitudes up to 3,600 metres. In winter they descend to lower slopes, ready for the annual rut in December. There are fewer than 2,500 left in the wild.

Whooping cranes, USA

These large, graceful, snow-white birds were once a common sight across much of North America, but by 1941 only 15 individuals remained. Huge conservation efforts have led to a good recovery in their numbers, with more than 250 birds now migrating up to 2,500 miles between inland breeding grounds in Canada and wintering areas in Texas. The best place to see them is Aransas National Wildlife Refuge on the Texas coast; they usually arrive here by early December.



7 TOP PLACES TO SEE FLOCKS OF WADERS

Nearly half of Europe's entire population of wading birds spend winter on Britain's coastal estuaries and tidal mudflats. The huge gatherings and their spectacular aerial displays are among nature's most magical sights and offer superb opportunities for creative images – see Laurie's December highlights (opposite). Knot, ringed plover, redshank, dunlin, curlew and oystercatcher are among the most abundant wintering waders. To witness the greatest displays, it's often worth coinciding your visit with an incoming tide – high spring tides are best. Be careful not to get caught out by rising waters, though, and wrap up warm!



1 Snettisham, Norfolk

Located on the curve of the Wash, the UK's largest estuary, Snettisham is arguably the best place in the country to see waders en masse. As the tidal waters rise, tens of thousands of waders are forced into the air and on to their roost sites in front of the reserve's hides. rspb.org.uk/snettisham

Point of Ayr reserve is positioned to give good views of dunlin, knot and other wading birds as they are pushed on to the saltmarshes by the tide. rspb.org.uk/dee-pointofayr

5 Morecambe Bay, Lancashire

Morecambe Bay's mudflats and saltmarshes are winter feeding grounds for around 250,000 wading birds, ducks and geese, including some of the largest wader flocks in Europe. During the hour before high tide, they can be seen in impressive numbers at RSPB Hest Bank. rspb.org.uk/morecambebay

2 Stanford Wharf, Essex

Part of the Thames Estuary, this specially created reserve provides a home for many wading birds during the colder months. Dunlin, black-tailed godwit and avocets may gather in large numbers, and you might also spot grey plovers and curlews. rspb.org.uk/stanfordwharf

6 Poole Harbour, Dorset

Up to 40,000 waders flock to Poole's spectacular natural harbour each winter; it has the UK's largest population of wintering avocets and is internationally important for its black-tailed godwits. The RSPB runs cruises – details at rspb.org.uk/events. pooletourism.com

3 Belfast Lough, Northern Ireland

Only 10 minutes from Belfast city centre, Belfast Lough attracts waders such as redshank, oystercatcher and black-tailed godwit, which gather at high tide. The reserve is currently being redeveloped; it will reopen in early 2015 as Belfast's 'Window on Wildlife'. rspb.org.uk/belfastlough

4 Point of Ayr, Flintshire

Situated at the mouth of the Dee Estuary, at the northernmost point of mainland Wales, the RSPB's

7 Exe Estuary, Devon

Flocks of up to 500 avocets gather above the estuary's vast mudflats in winter, and they are often joined by hundreds of black-tailed godwits. RSPB boat trips, from Starcross, are a good way to see them. rspb.org.uk/exeestuary

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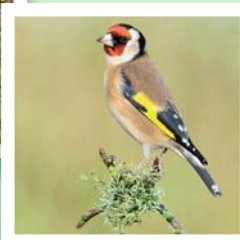
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A rare and armoured visitor

While staying in one of Africa's greatest wildlife sanctuaries, Luke Massey is privileged to encounter one of its rarest and most unusual inhabitants: a Temminck's pangolin

During my three-month stay in South Luangwa National Park, in Zambia, I had grown accustomed to having animal visitors around the lodge, from elephants and leopards to hippos and hyenas. One creature I had never expected to see, however, was a Temminck's pangolin. Covered with a protective layer of scales and resembling an oversized pinecone, these mammals are incredibly rare; only four individuals had been recorded in the whole of the national park since 1937. Their threatened status is thought to be due to hunting; pangolins across Africa and Asia are sought after for their body parts. In particular, there is demand for their scales, which are used in ancient Chinese medicine and also made into charms.

Every so often a group of local actors come to the lodge to perform a play, called the Saker, for the guests. I'd seen it a few times but on this

evening I was aiming to record their singing to add to the videos I was producing. I was busy recording when I got a tap on my shoulder. 'Luke, there's a pangolin on the path. Come quick.' I won't write what I said in reply, but once my brain had processed the information, I leapt up, grabbed my camera and was on my way.

The sight that greeted me was surreal; there was a group of guides, managers, waiters, chefs and room attendants armed with cameras, iPads and phones, all standing in a line looking at the female pangolin.

I stopped snapping pictures after failing miserably to get a shot that didn't include a human or an unnatural fence in the background. By around 11pm the pangolin had settled down to sleep; it seemed that she had decided to call it a night. When 11.30pm came and she still hadn't stirred I gave her one last look and headed off; walking away from what was probably the only

pangolin I'd ever see. Sitting in my room looking through my photos, I was torn. This was a mega rare animal that only a handful of people in the world have seen in the wild, and my images just didn't do it justice.

I was trying to decide whether or not to head back out to see it when I heard rustling outside my room. I always heard rustling outside my room, but as I was awake I thought I'd go and check to see what it was.

I shone my torch around and there was nothing, but I could still hear rustling. So, I ventured out a bit further and there it was, the pangolin! It was amazing to photograph her feeding completely naturally, sniffing away and zipping her crazily long tongue in and out to grab passing ants.

After that encounter, every time I heard rustling outside my room I checked to see if the pangolin had returned, but she never did. ■

On the wing

When one of Steve Young's favourite rarities turns up on the Yorkshire coast, he makes the journey to see it for himself and is rewarded with some superb views

top This was my favourite shot from the day; one of the few I took that shows the upper wing perfectly, with wings spread to show the intricate dark markings.

bottom On the ground it's not a particularly great looking bird, and the background was messy, but it was still nice to add to the files.

Even though I've been travelling around the country since the 1980s trying to photograph various rare birds, there are still some species that make me want to go back and see them again. One such species is ivory gull; this enigmatic high Arctic breeder is one of those magical birds that make you want to press the shutter time and time again.

I've seen a few ivory gulls in the UK. My first was in the north-east in 1985, on an atmospheric February day with gale force winds and snow and sleet showers. A first-winter bird was feeding on a dead gull on the beach at Saltburn while a couple of photographers took some pictures. Another memorable bird was an all-white adult at Black Rock Sands in Wales, in 2002. It was feeding on a dead porpoise, and again just two or three photographers were snapping away.

Do you start to see a theme developing with this species? Yep, they like to feed on dead things; if it is dead and on a beach and there happens to be an ivory gull in the area (which is highly unlikely, as there are usually only one or two

records a year) then the gull may find it.

In 2013, I travelled once again to the east side of the country to see an ivory gull, this time to Patrington, Yorkshire. The gull, which had been present for a few days, was another first-year bird, as most of the recorded sightings are. Because there was nothing for it to feed on, birdwatchers had been bringing fish for it to eat; and the handful of photographers present during those other two trips had been replaced by the now familiar 'rare bird paparazzi'. With most people these days carrying a camera of some sort, this was going to be one of

the most photographed ivory gulls ever.

Despite the presence of plenty of large, dead fish, the gull was a distant dot on the edge of the estuary marshland. It seemed content to sit and preen itself, having flown in and fed just before I had arrived; camera screens were held my way so that I could see their lovely images taken earlier – thanks guys!

I didn't have that long to wait before I had a chance to take some of my own pictures, however. After about an hour, the gull decided it was time for another tasty snack of rotting fish and headed our way, circling around the tideline. A lovely blue sky provided the perfect background, and with the sun shining beautifully on the gull, cameras were soon clicking into action. In flight, the bird looked quite superb, with black markings contrasting with the white plumage. But when on the ground feeding, the photos looked rather messy; with a grass and mud background and some very dead-looking fish.

But the trip had been well worthwhile, with a nice selection of images for my files. I had more memories of a species that had wandered far to get here, and deserved all the attention it had received.



Another flight shot, taken just after the bird had finished feeding and was heading back to the marsh for another preen.



The ivory gull soars above the marshland while birders below come and go.

Steve's December highlights



Bird of the month

There can't be a better-known or more popular bird than the good old robin; synonymous with Christmas, this species probably has more photos taken of it than any other.

Many non-birdwatchers think this bird only appears in December (due to the close association with Christmas cards), but it is a very common breeding bird and is here all year round. Numbers do increase during winter, however, with the arrival of wintering birds from northern Europe.

Robins are relatively easy birds to photograph, readily coming to gardens and enjoying food put out for them. One of their favourite foods is live mealworms and they can be quite easily trained to land on certain perches when coming down to be fed.



top left Robin (juvenile) with mealworm: Juvenile robins look very different to the adults, lacking any red until they begin to moult a few weeks later. They share the love of mealworms from an early age, though.

top right Robin in snow: Forever linked with snowy Christmas scenes; robins are common breeders in the UK. In winter, birds from the continent arrive, boosting numbers.

above left Robin in bush: Fluffed up against the cold of winter, a robin snuggles down to roost in the safety of a bush.

BIRD PHOTOGRAPHY TIP

It has always been a problem getting close to birds without disturbing them; hides have been used since the beginning of bird photography, but one of the best portable hides of all is the car. They are comfortable, relatively warm – especially in the winter – and can even provide a bit of entertainment for those quiet moments, via the radio/cd player.

Cars can be as complicated or as simple a hide as you want to make them. Some photographers go to great lengths, placing netting over the windows and camouflaging their 4x4, and then driving to an isolated location. Others just wind down the window, rest a beanbag on the ledge and snap away at a nearby site – from local parks and roadside verges to beaches and farmland.

Wherever you park up, make sure you turn the engine off to prevent vibration, have the camera and lens ready to use, and try to change your position from time to time to relieve any back strain.



above Barn owl: Staking out a known barn owl area doesn't guarantee results, but after a patient wait in my car I was rewarded with a series of images.



above right Redwing: Cars can be used as hides to photograph a variety of species; this redwing was photographed in my local park as it fed on fallen berries in winter.

above top Starling: Sometimes birds can come too close... this starling was baited with bits of meat thrown from the car window.

LOCATION OF THE MONTH

Frampton Marsh, Lincolnshire



Comprising large freshwater scrapes, wet grassland, a reedbed and some of the most mature saltmarsh of the Wash, this coastal wetland reserve is extremely rich in plants, birds and invertebrates. As well as attracting impressive numbers of ducks and all the usual waders of the Wash, the marsh supports thousands of brent geese from Siberia during autumn and winter. There is also the chance of seeing merlin, peregrine, hen harrier, short-eared and barn owl, and you might be lucky to spot flocks of finches and buntings, notably linnet and twite. A hard-surfaced footpath encircles the reedbed, and a network of public footpaths surrounds the reserve; these are mostly along sea banks, giving good views across the marshes. A two-mile walk to the mouth of the river Witham and extending out into the Wash can be particularly rewarding.

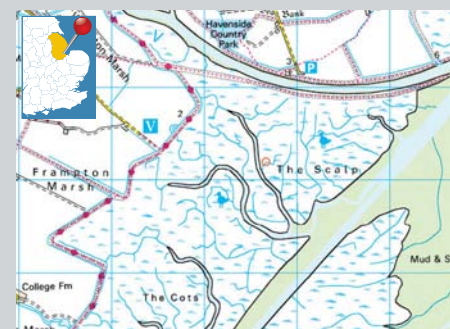
Location Four miles from Boston.

Facilities Visitor centre, toilets, car parking, footpaths and three hides – two of which have 360° views.

Opening times The reserve, hides, footpaths and car parking are available at all times; visitor centre and toilets open 10am–4pm daily (except Christmas Day and Boxing Day).

Entry fee Free, but donations are welcomed.

Website rspb.org.uk/framptonmarsh



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Call of nature

We've all done it; got out of bed at ridiculous o'clock to go out taking photos. For us it is part of the joy of being outdoor photographers, but spare a thought for the other people in our lives who have to put up with these early morning forays. Dominic Hames reveals what it's like for them

I've got a good idea.' Those are the words often uttered early on a Friday evening by Ruth, the photographer in our house. I listen with trepidation, as I already realise that what Ruth thinks is a good idea is really a very bad one. I look out of the window, where there is a cloudless sky. 'Why don't we get up early, before the sun rises, and go to...' I don't hear the rest of the sentence. I always silently groan when I hear the word 'early' followed by the more dreaded phrase 'before the sun rises'.

It's midsummer. The sun rises at a time I have never heard of and, with a possible one to two-hour trip involved to reach a location, I know this is another night where I have little use for a bed. I look at Ruth and say yes. I always say yes, and it's always followed by 'of course' when she asks if I'm sure.

Within an hour Ruth is asleep on the settee. I wake her several hours later, after midnight, when I go to bed. I'm tired and sleepy; Ruth is awake and excited about the imminent photography trip. With four hours sleep on the sofa already under her belt she won't stop talking. After I answer goodnight to every question, she gets the message and turns the lights off.

What seems like only minutes later, the dreaded hour arrives and the alarm goes off. Ruth gets up and checks the weather, but gets back into bed. Either the weather isn't right, and my night's sleep is assured, or she feels guilty about waking me. I don't know which it is, and Ruth thinks I'm asleep. I breathe deeply and lie as still as possible, trying not to give any clues. However, I have a problem; it is a common one faced by many people upon reaching a certain age. When I wake up I want to go to the toilet. Resisting the urge, I lie there not moving, but it won't go away. Inevitably the urge wins and I have to get up. Equally inevitably it's not long before the bedroom lights come on and Ruth is telling me the conditions outside look perfect.

After feeling our way through the dark to the car, dragging our strangely sleepy puppy behind us, we

head off to our destination. Is it a forest? Is it the coast? I only hope it isn't a mountain. We arrive somewhere an hour before there is sufficient light to provide any clues as to where we are. Strangely though, we are not alone. There are eight to 10 individuals similar to Ruth. They all have the same kit, and wear the same clothes. They also all have a tripod, and none of them are birdwatchers. All bar Ruth are male.

I walk the now excitable puppy while the photographers set up shop. It's interesting to observe how they move and get in each other's way. No one complains, although I can guess what they're thinking. The sun starts to rise, and they move again as, according to Ruth, 'the light isn't quite right'. They get in each other's way again. Meanwhile, the puppy and I do multiple laps of the location but struggle to find a route that doesn't take us through the scene. Eventually, we resort to doing laps of the car park.

The photographers' morning reaches its climax as the sun rises, and they all click the dangly thing hanging between their tripod legs. For them at least it is the perfect start to the day. Some of their images may feature in a magazine or online soon, but most will likely never be seen again. As the last of the other photographers head home, we go to find the local café for breakfast. Although we have been up for hours, the café isn't open; it's too early.

Arriving home before I normally get up, I ponder whether it was worth it. Despite my middle of the night resistance, the answer is yes. My rewards usually come from seeing Ruth's excitement when she gets an image published, though earlier this year it was her reaction when she won a category in the British Wildlife Photography Awards. I wasn't there when that winning photo was taken, but I did say yes at the time when asked if it was okay for her to go without me to the Shetland Islands, where it was captured. I also added 'of course' when she asked if I was sure, particularly as it meant a week without my sleep being disturbed. ■

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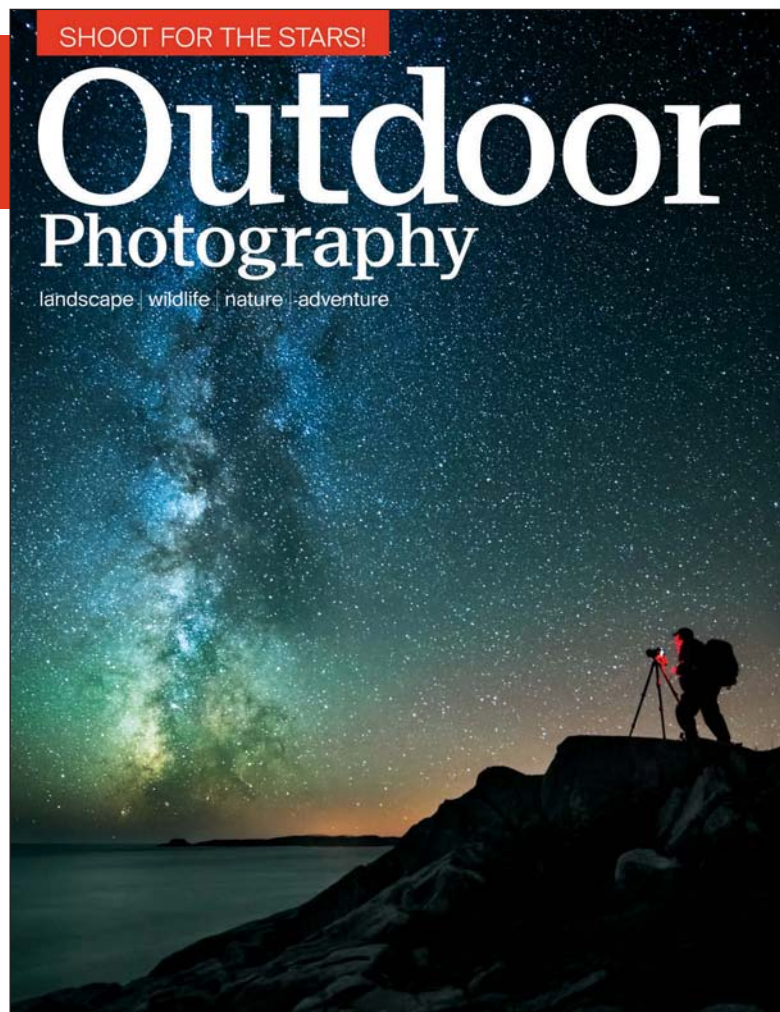
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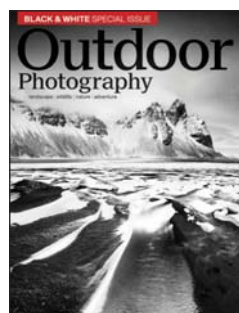
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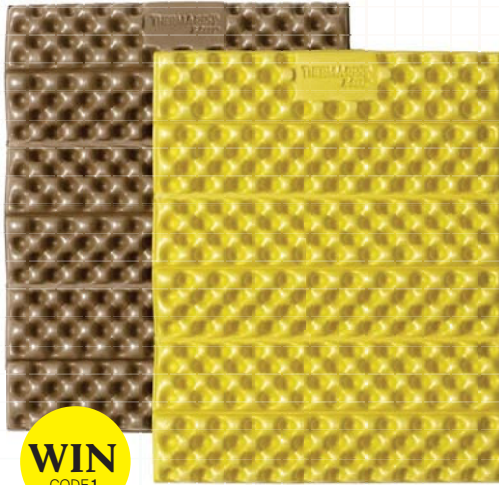
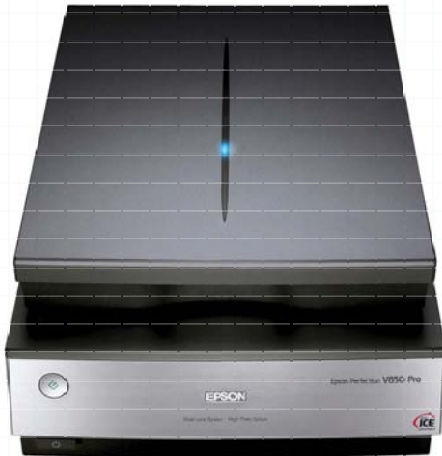
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CODE 1

Therm-A-Rest Z Seat

Super lightweight and virtually indestructible, the Z Seat's padded close-cell foam protects you from rough terrain when kneeling or getting down low for interesting angles. It also fits perfectly into a Christmas stocking with its roll-up, accordion-style design.

Guide price £14
thermarest.com

Jetboil Joule +

Boiling a litre of water in less than three minutes, the Jetboil Joule matches the performance of multi-fuel stoves but offers the ease and versatility of canister systems. With a consistent 10,000 BTU output, even in temperatures as low as -12°C, you and your friends can still enjoy a hot meal while camping on the highest peaks.

Guide price £195
cotswoldoutdoor.com



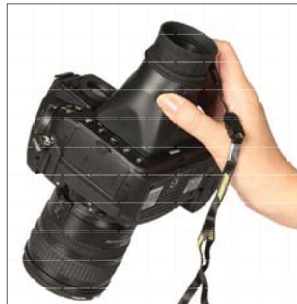
WIN
CODE 2

GEARING UP THE LANDSCAPE PHOTOGRAPHER

Hoodman 3.0 LCD screen loupe

On sunny days, reviewing your images on your camera's LCD screen can be almost impossible. Hoodman's 3in loupe ensures glare-free, sharp viewing of your settings, histograms and compositions. Encased in rubber to protect your screen from scratches, this handy piece of kit could become your new best friend.

Guide price £77.99
wexphotographic.com



Brunton Hydrogen Reactor

Ever been half way through an all-day shoot in a remote location and your electronics have run out of juice? This innovative piece of kit combines hydrogen and oxygen to produce electricity on the move in any conditions. By simply putting a Hydrogen Core into the charger, you can power your smartphone, GPS systems and other USB devices. The pack includes two Hydrogen Cores to get you started.

Guide price £135
brunton.com





The North Face Hadoken

The ideal mid-layer for your mountain expeditions this season, the Hadoken is a fast-drying Polartec Power Dry fleece that matches weather performance with comfort and ease of movement. Weighing only 350g and available in five eye-catching colours, the Hadoken is firmly on our Christmas list.

Guide price £90
thenorthface.co.uk



Tech 21 Impactology iPad case

It's not only the look of Tech21's Impactology case that makes it so cool. Lined with shock-absorbing D30 material to dissipate impact, and crafted with a TPU formula to give flexibility and resilience, you can rest easy knowing that your device is protected. Available for iPads, iPhones, Macbooks and a range of Android phones.

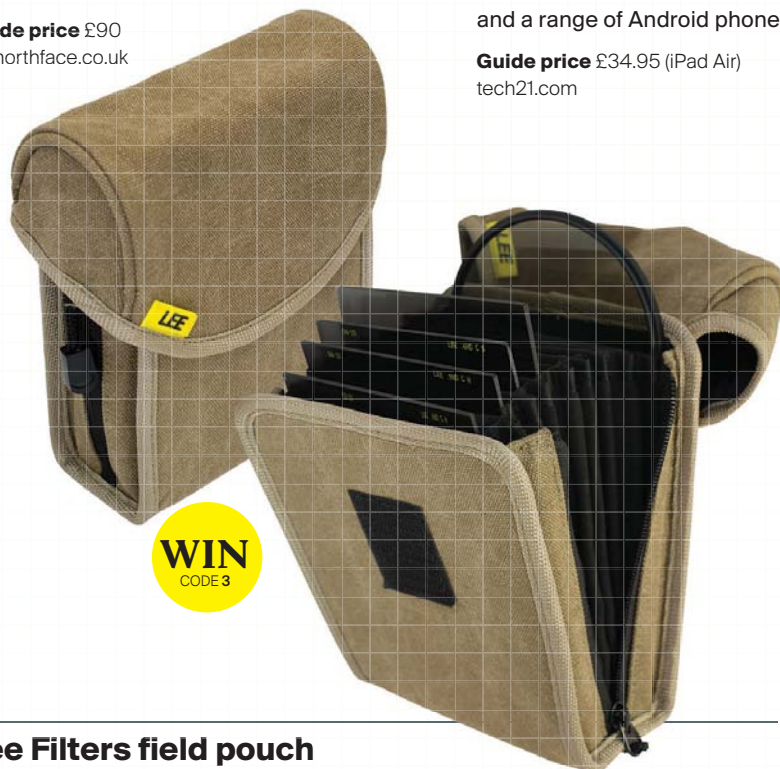
Guide price £34.95 (iPad Air)
tech21.com



Sprayway Grendel

The Grendel jacket draws upon Sprayway's expertise in producing totally windproof and water resistant outdoor garments with maximum breathability. Combining the comfort of a warm mid-layer and the flexibility of a soft shell, the jacket's high-cut collar and drawcord adjustable hem will protect you from wild winter weather.

Guide price £160
sprayway.com



Lee Filters field pouch

An essential part of any serious landscape photographer's kit, filters can be protected from dust and dirt while still being at your fingertips with Lee Filters' new field pouch. With its concertina design, the pouch holds up to 10 filters and can be worn in different ways thanks to its three strap options.

Guide price £37.99
leefilters.com

Suunto MCB

Despite advancements in GPS technology and the growing popularity of smartphone maps, having a compass in your kit bag is still essential. The Suunto MCB is a floating, ergonomic multi-purpose mirror compass designed to help you go further into the outdoors. It comes with a detachable snap-lock lanyard with whistle.

Guide price £25
suunto.com



Hilleberg Enan

Hilleberg's new one-person tent, the Enan, is modelled on the Swedish firm's award-winning, single-pole Akto tent but is nearly a third lighter, weighing just 1.1kg. It uses the latest lightweight yet strong fabrics, including Hilleberg's new Kerlon 600 outer tent fabric; a 10-denier high tenacity ripstop Nylon 66 triple-coated with 100% silicone. The three-season tent has plenty of room for one occupant and his or her gear, and it packs down small – ideal for photographers on the go. Inbuilt ventilation encourages constant airflow, and in wet and windy conditions Kerlon 600 fabric panels can be rolled down and secured to cover the outer tent's mesh ends.

Guide price £559
hilleberg.com

WIN
CODE 4



Sigma 150-600mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM

Sigma's new high-end, super-telephoto zoom, part of the Sports range, is designed for challenging, high-action situations. Features include an updated optical stabiliser with an accelerometer for improved panning, and a new zoom lock switch capable of locking at any focal length. It's compatible with Sigma's newly developed teleconverters.

Guide price £1,599.99
sigma-imaging-uk.com

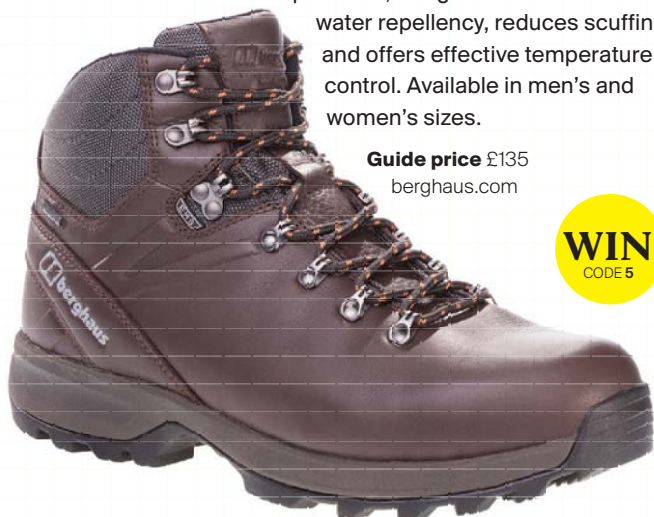
GEARING UP THE WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER

Berghaus Explorer Ridge Plus

Following over 1,000 hours of intense field testing and research, Berghaus' classic Explorer Ridge boots have been updated for winter 2014. The two to three-season hiking boots promise the same out-of-the-box comfort as their predecessors, but Berghaus has introduced a raft of improvements and refinements. Highlights include targeted foam positioning for maximum heel hold, a modernised and simplified upper, a new outsole for superior grip, and a hike-specific footbed for long-lasting underfoot support and comfort. The use of premium, full-grain leather increases water repellency, reduces scuffing and offers effective temperature control. Available in men's and women's sizes.

Guide price £135
berghaus.com

WIN
CODE 5



DexShell Wading Socks

WIN
CODE 6

Take to the water like a duck with DexShell's range of waterproof socks, which use a three-layer construction to ensure feet stay dry and comfortable. The magic ingredient is porelle – a 100% waterproof but breathable membrane. The new knee-length Wading Sock features an in-cuff seal to prevent water from splashing in over the top of the sock, making them ideal for getting unique angles on wetland wildlife. Available in sizes S-XL.

Guide price £32.95
dexshell.com



Rite in the Rain #146

WIN
CODE 7

Made to preserve your notes come rain or shine, Rite in the Rain's waterproof 50-sheet notebook is the ultimate field companion. Measuring a pocketable 4x6in, it is specially designed to endure harsh conditions; even the spiral binding will endure impact without losing shape.

Guide price £6.95
riteintherain.com



Nikon SB-500

WIN
CODE 8

The simple-to-use SB-500 is Nikon's first speedlight with a built-in LED light, which is handy for shooting close-up images, and incredibly useful for filmmakers working in low-light situations. The flash head tilts up to 90° and rotates horizontally through 180°, and both the flash head and the LED cover a 24mm angle of view in FX format. The SB-500 is compatible with Nikon DSLRs and operates with two AA batteries.

Guide price £199.99
nikon.co.uk



Fjällräven Barents Pro

WIN
CODE 9

The Barents Pro trousers combine functional, hardwearing design with an advanced, performance cut. Made from durable and versatile G-1000 fabric, they have a low waist at the front and a higher back to protect against inclement weather and to provide cover when kneeling. Fjällräven's Greenland Wax can be added to increase the trouser's wind and water-resistant properties.

Guide price £115
fjallraven.co.uk



Lowepro Pro Trekker 450 AW

Lowepro has launched a new and improved version of its popular Pro Trekker Series pro expedition camera packs, built to provide excellent protection for photographic gear and unrivalled comfort when carrying a heavy load. The Pro Trekker 450 AW can hold up to two pro DSLRs (one with a 400mm f/2.8 lens attached), four to six extra lenses, two flashes, a tripod, a laptop (up to 15in) plus accessories and personal gear.

Guide price £325
lowepro.co.uk



WIN
CODE 10

Ventura 14W Solar Panel SPV140

Stay fully charged, wherever you are, with this handy multi-functional charging device. The SPV140 uses four high-quality, fold-out monocrystalline silicon solar panels, which generate a total of 14W of power. Hardwearing and waterproof, it includes 11 adapter plugs to connect most phones, cameras, tablets and GPS units. It is also compact and lightweight, making it easy to store and transport.

Guide price £89.99
snooper.co.uk



Wildlife Watching C80R

As well as providing camouflage, Wildlife Watching Supplies' reversible camera and lens covers also provide a barrier against the elements and reduce battery drain, shutter noise and temperature shock. The covers are available in a range of sizes and patterns, including new Realtree Xtra camouflage, which uses the latest technology for a 3D effect.

Guide price £36.78-£70.34
wildlifewatchingsupplies.co.uk



WIN
CODE 11

Powermonkey Explorer 2

This small, tough and compact charger will keep your gear powered up when you are far away from a mains socket. The dual-core, 6,000mAh lithium ion battery can recharge an iPhone 5 up to three times and a GoPro Hero 3+ four times, and can be used for digital cameras, satellite phones and more. It is waterproof for 30 minutes in up to one metre of water when used with the supplied cable, even when charging a device. The anodised case can support the weight of a Land Rover Defender!

Guide price £79
powertraveller.com

WIN
CODE12



Ricoh WG-30

Life on the trail or under the waves can be tough, and the WG-30 is designed to capture your escapades without suffering from the conditions. Waterproof to 12 metres, shockproof against falls from 1.5m and freezeproof to -10°C, it boasts a back-illuminated 16MP CMOS sensor that delivers excellent images even in low light situations. It also records full HD (1920 x 1080p) video.

Guide price £229.99
ricoh-imaging.co.uk

Sugru

Sugru has become a global phenomenon for fixing and forming all manner of things – from moulding a bespoke camera grip to repairing your walking boots. This magical self-setting rubber can be moulded to any shape, bonds to most surfaces and sets as a flexible silicone rubber overnight. Don't get caught without it!

Guide price from £6.99
(3x mini packs)
sugru.com



GEARING UP THE ADVENTURE PHOTOGRAPHER

BioLite KettleCharge

If you love cool kit – and let's face it, who doesn't – then BioLite, the makers of the iconic CampStove, have now taken on that most ordinary of camping items the kettle and turned it into a power source. The 10-litre KettleCharge uses a thermoelectric generator on its base to generate up to 10 watts while you are making a cuppa on location. A 15-minute charge is sufficient for up to five hours of phone chat or video charge and up to 20 hours of charge for audio devices.

Guide price £159.95
whitbyandco.co.uk

WIN
CODE13



Sealskinz Dragoneye

Shooting in wet and wintry conditions can leave your fingers frozen, but operating the camera demands plenty of dexterity. Dragoneye is a low profile, close fitting waterproof and windproof glove with anti-slip features and virtually no 'pull out' when taking the gloves off. The index finger is designed to work with touchscreen devices, too. They will help you stay out there for longer.

Guide price £38
sealskinz.com

WIN
CODE14



Patagonia Nano Air

Fed up with being too cold one moment and too hot the next on your photography adventures? The Nano Air uses FullRange insulation between lightweight and durable shell and liner fabrics to create a jacket that offers great flexibility and superb breathability. No need to keep putting this one on and taking it off as you transition from taking images to being on the move.

Guide price £160
patagonia.com



GoPro Hero4 Black

There may be numerous contenders for the action camera throne but GoPro is still top of the desire list for many people. The Hero4 Black produces twice the performance of its predecessor and shoots 4K video at 30fps and 1080p video at a blistering 120fps (with 8.3MP stills grabs, too). There's improved image quality and low light performance as well. Start drooling now...

Guide price £369.99
gopro.com



Lowepro Hardside 300 Photo

The Hardside 300 Photo is the mid-sized offering in a new range of highly protective hard cases from the camera bag gurus at Lowepro. Its outer shell is made of formed ABS polyester for extreme impact resistance, and there is a soft-sided insert case that fits a DSLR with 70-200mm f/2.8 lens attached (with hood removed), four to six lenses or flashes and other accessories.

Only available via Amazon

Guide price £171
lowepro.co.uk

MindShift Rotation180° Trail

MindShift's award-winning technology features in the smaller and lighter 16-litre Rotation180° Trail backpack. You can say goodbye to taking your pack off each time you want to shoot a photo on your adventures, as the backpack swivels easily round to allow swift access to your camera gear. The backpack, which can be used separately, carries a compact DSLR or mirrorless camera system, an iPad Mini-sized tablet, plus maps and accessories. The upper pack takes extra clothing or bike spares, a 1.5 or two-litre hydration reservoir and other essential pieces of kit.

Guide price £183
snapperstuff.com



Tentsile Connect

Step change innovation in outdoor products is rare, but Tentsile have redefined camping with their aerial tree tents. The Connect is good for two people, comes with a removable fly sheet and the poles create decent headroom. Use the heavy-duty ratchets and straps to sling it up between trees (not too high!) and enjoy a unique experience floating between the Earth and stars.

Guide price £370
tentsile.com

**WIN
PRIZES**

What a giveaway! To enter the prize draws, send us an email to opcomp@thegmcgroup.com with 'Gearing up X' as the email subject, where X is the relevant code number from the yellow bubble, and your full name and address. Only one email per person per product is allowed, and only one of each noted product is offered as a prize, subject to availability. We reserve the right to offer an alternative prize of the same value. **Deadline for entries is midnight on 9 January 2015.** Winners will be notified by 4 February 2015. By entering, you are giving permission for your data to be shared with the company relevant to your entry.

Nikon D810

The D800 upgrade claims to deliver the highest image quality of any DSLR in Nikon's history; **Andy Luck** finds out if it lives up to its lofty promise

Guide price £2,699 (body only)

Contact nikon.co.uk



below left Dawn on the Isle of May: when shooting in bright conditions, such as at dawn or sunset, the D810's low ISO settings can be handy for stills and video. *Nikon D810 with 150-600mm lens, ISO 64, 1/400sec at f/7.1*

below right Dragonfly: when paired with a good lens, the 36MP sensor can yield great detail, such as the facets of this dragonfly's eyes. *Nikon D810 with 105mm macro lens, ISO 800, 1/640sec at f/11*

The Nikon D800 and D800e were phenomenal cameras when they were launched in early 2012, and they still are. I have used the former for professional work continuously for the past two years, and have had some of the best results of any camera I've shot with. It has not all been a bed of roses, however. Firstly, the autofocus could be much more consistent. Continuous shooting is on the slow side, and the camera is, frankly, too noisy – often drawing adverse attention. Worse of all, micro detail can be seriously compromised by vibration at slower shutter speeds, often negating the 36MP advantage that the cameras are supposed to be all about! Also, in my

experience, the cameras' video quality is surprisingly limited compared to its peers, and even compared to much cheaper cameras I have filmed with.

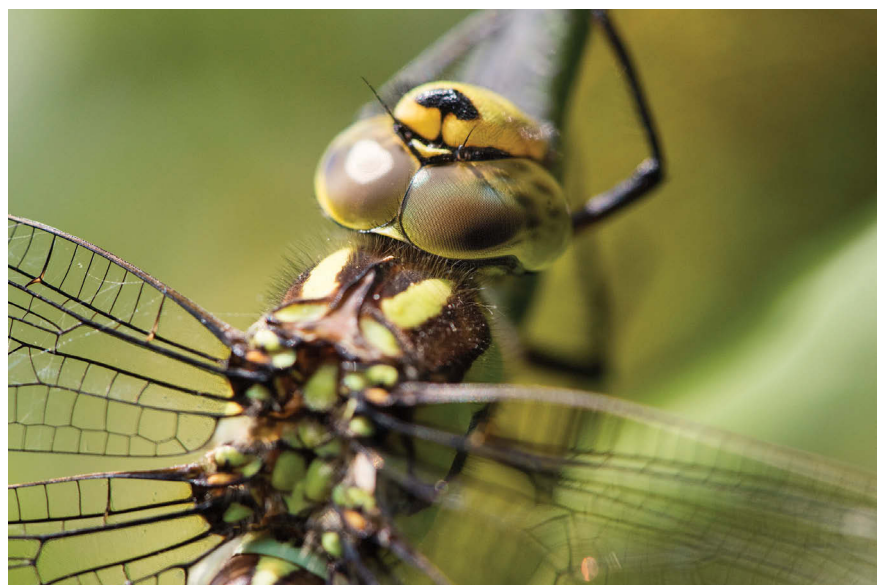
The good news is that the new Nikon D810, for the most part, addresses all these issues and more. True, the new camera looks almost identical to its forebears, but that's something owners of the previous models will probably welcome on the basis that there was nothing wrong with the design – if it ain't broke, don't fix it! Ergonomically and operationally the D810 is just as effective and feels as bulletproof, too.

Inside, however, there is a new 36.3MP full-frame sensor and the EXPEED 4 processor from the D4s, which instantly

eclipses the slightly tardy behaviour of the previous models. Interestingly, a small 9MP sRAW file option, borrowed from the D4, has been added for those who prefer not to handle large file sizes. Nikon has also completely removed the optical low-pass filter in the sensor and claims this results in the highest image quality in Nikon's history. I am sure they are right; the overall image quality, tone and pop of images taken with this camera are a delight to behold.

The first thing I noticed handling the new camera, however, was just how quiet it is. The shutter now has a wonderfully precise 'snick' to it instead of the mighty 'clack' of the old model. Furthermore, there is a new Q (quiet) setting on the left

Despite all these new power hungry improvements, the claimed battery life of up to 1,200 still images on a single charge seems accurate



control dial, which is significantly quieter still. There's also Qc (quiet continuous), which is very effective for situations where both speed and discretion are needed. And, speaking of speed, the continuous shooting rate has also improved, with 5fps in FX-format and 7fps in DX-format, which still results in impressive 15.3MP images.

The D810's 3.2in 1,229k-dot LCD monitor makes it easier to see just how good the new image quality is when out in the field. There is also a new live view split-screen zoom, which is very handy for checking focus in different areas of an image.

The viewfinder seems brighter and clearer, making composition more enjoyable and manual focusing much easier. When it comes to autofocus, the Multi-CAM 3500FX 51-point AF system (again as per the D4s) gives the D810 a new Group Area AF mode for improved tracking against distracting backgrounds, and it feels much snappier and more responsive. Fifteen cross-type



Red deer hind: the D810 is so much quieter than the D800; this really can make a difference when photographing nervous wildlife.
Nikon D810 with 150-600mm lens, ISO 500, 1/500sec at f/7.1

TECH SPEC

Effective pixels 36.3 million

Sensor size 35.9x24mm

Image sensor format FX

Storage media CompactFlash (CF) (Type I, compliant with UDMA), SD, SDHC, SDXC

Continuous shooting 5fps

ISO sensitivity 64-12800, Lo-1 (ISO 32), Hi-1 (ISO 25600), Hi-2 (ISO 51200)

Autofocus system Nikon Advanced Multi-CAM 3500FX autofocus sensor module with TTL phase detection

Video Full HD 920x1080 60p/50p/30p/25p/24p; HD 1280x720 60p/50p

Monitor size 3.2in diagonal

Monitor type Wide viewing angle TFT-LCD

Battery EN-EL15 Lithium-ion Battery

Dimensions 146x123x81.5mm

Weight (body only) 880g



sensors in the centre of f/5.6 or faster, and 11 with an aperture of f/8 ensure a wide range of compatible lenses can produce great accuracy.

An ISO range of 64-12800, which can be expanded to from 32 to 51200, is not just impressive in terms of flexibility, but also in the way the new sensor and processor combination keeps noise at higher sensitivities under control, despite the lack of a low pass filter.

An electronic front-curtain feature has been added to reduce image shake and internal vibration during exposure. Despite all these new power hungry improvements, the claimed battery life of up to 1,200 still images on a single charge seems accurate.

The video and audio recording shortcomings have largely been attended to with what are claimed to be broadcast-quality FX and DX formats at 50p/60p frame rates. Problems of noise, moiré and false colour, which afflicted the old models, appear to be improved, with the D810 providing a nice HD picture. Clean HDMI output with simultaneous capture to the camera card and an external recorder is now also possible. In addition, zebras and new 'clarity' and 'flat' settings in picture control all help. These are moves in the right direction, but recent cameras like the Panasonic GH4, which records 4K video direct to the internal card, have changed the landscape considerably. ■

LIKES

- ✓ Big and bright optical viewfinder
- ✓ Peerless stills image quality
- ✓ Rugged dependability
- ✓ Responsiveness
- ✓ Greatly improved AF
- ✓ Quietness

DISLIKES

- ✗ No 4K video
- ✗ No built-in Wi-Fi

VERDICT

The improvements Nikon has made in the D810 make it far more than just the interim cosmetic update that the model number might imply. It is quieter, faster, sharper and more video friendly. This is now a camera with pre-eminent, if not unbeatable, stills competency, that will span a far greater range of professional tasks and subject matter. It's a pity, then, that the video improvements may just be too little too late.

RATINGS

Handling	98%
Performance	98%
Specification	98%
Value for money	96%

OVERALL
97.5%



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Canon
EOS M

EOS M 22mm + Adapter £329

EOS M + 22mm f2.0 + EF Adapter £329

Canon Lenses

NEW EF-S 24mm f2.8	£179
EF 35mm f1.4 L USM	£1099
EF 50mm f1.2 L USM	£1146
EF-S 60mm f2.8 USM Macro	£348.26
EF 85mm f1.8 USM	£288
EF 100mm f2.8 L IS USM Macro	£699
NEW EF 400mm f4.0 DO IS USM II	£6999
EF-S 10-22mm f3.5-4.5 USM	£448
EF 16-35mm f2.8 L USM MkII	£1169
EF 17-40mm f4 L USM	£594
EF-S 17-55mm f2.8 IS USM	£576.89
EF-S 18-135mm f3.5-5.6 IS STM	£359
EF-S 18-200mm f3.5-5.6 IS	£399
EF 24-70mm f2.8 L II USM	£1549
NEW EF 24-105mm f3.5-5.6 IS STM	£479
EF-S 55-250mm f4-5.6 IS II	£208
EF 70-200mm f4 L IS USM	£495
EF 70-300mm f4.0-5.6 L IS USM	£1069

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Sigma or Samyang lenses,
visit our website

Canon
EOS 70D

18.0
megapixels
5.0 fps
1080p
movie mode

700D Body £479

700D + 18-55mm IS STM	£549
700D + 18-135mm IS STM	£719
700D + 18-135mm IS STM + 40mm STM	£859

Canon
EOS 7D
Mark II

20.2
megapixels
10.0 fps
1080p
movie mode

NEW 7D Mk II Body £1599

NEW 7D Mark II Body £1599

Canon
EOS 70D

20.2
megapixels
7.0 fps
1080p
movie mode

70D Body £815

70D Body	£815
70D+18-55mm IS STM	£934
70D+18-135mm IS STM	£1070

Canon
EOS 7D

18.0
megapixels
8.0 fps
1080p
movie mode

7D Body £799

7D Body	£799
7D + 18-135mm f3.5-5.6 IS	£999.97
7D + 15-85mm f3.5-5.6 IS USM	£1319.97

Canon
EOS 6D

20.2
megapixels
4.5 fps
1080p
movie mode
full frame
CMOS sensor

6D Body £1299

6D Body	£1299
6D + 24-105mm f4 L IS USM	£1799
6D + 24-70mm	£2699

Canon
EOS 5D
Mark III

22.3
megapixels
6.0 fps
Full Frame
CMOS sensor

5D Mk III Body £2299

5D Mk III Body	£2299
5D Mk III + 24-105mm f4.0L IS USM	£2899
5D Mk III + 24-70mm f2.8 II	£3799

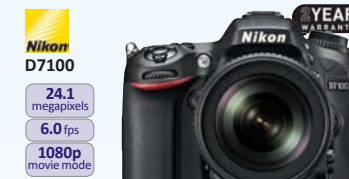


Nikon
D3300

24.2
megapixels
5.0 fps

D3300 Body £379

D3300 Body	£379
D3300 + 18-55mm VR II	£404



Nikon
D7100

24.1
megapixels
6.0 fps
1080p
movie mode

D7100 Body £809

D7100 Body	£809
D7100 + 18-105mm VR	£939



Nikon
D610

24.1
megapixels
6.0 fps
1080p
movie mode

D610 Body £1330

D610 Body	£1330
D610 + 24-85mm	£1749



Nikon
D750

24.3
megapixels
6.5 fps
Full Frame
sensor

NEW D750 From £1799

NEW D750 Body	£1799
NEW D750 + 24-85mm VR	£2249
NEW D750 + 24-120mm VR	£2349



Nikon
D810

36.3
megapixels
7.0 fps
Full Frame
sensor

D810 Body £2599

D810 Body £2599



Nikon
D4s

16.2
megapixels
11.0 fps
Full Frame
sensor

D4s Body £5199

D4s Body £5199



Nikon
1 V3

18.4
megapixels
60.0 fps

NEW Nikon 1: V3 £729

Nikon 1 V3 Body	£729
+10-30mm PD Zoom + EVF + Grip	£1049
V2 + 10-30mm Lens	£649

Nikon Lenses

NEW 20mm f1.8G AF-S ED	£679
35mm f1.8 G AF-S DX	£148
40mm f2.8 G AF-S DX Micro	£185
50mm f1.8 G AF-S	£149
85mm f1.8 G AF-S	£375
105mm f2.8 G AF-S VR IF ED Micro	£629
16-85mm f3.5-5.6 G AF-S ED DX VR	£438
18-105mm AF-S DX Nikkor f3.5-5.6 G ED VR	£204
18-200mm f3.5-5.6 G ED AF-S DX VR II	£584
24-70mm f2.8 G AF-S ED	£1235
28-300mm f3.5-5.6 G AF-S ED VR	£659
55-200mm f4.0-5.6 G AF-S DX VR IF ED	£241
55-300mm f4.5-5.6 G AF-S DX VR	£279
70-300mm f4.5-5.6 G AF-S IF ED VR	£419

For 2-year warranty on any camera and lens kit simply register your new Nikon within 30 days of purchase. Offer applies to UK & Republic of Ireland stock only. Call 0800 597 8472 or visit www.nikon.co.uk/register

OLYMPUS

OM-D E-M1



16.3
megapixels

**OM-D E-M1
From £949**

OM-D E-M1 Body	£949
OM-D E-M1 + 12-50mm	£1249
OM-D E-M1 + 12-40mm	£1699
OM-D E-M5 Body	£589
OM-D E-M5 + 12-50mm	£749

OM-D M10
Black or Silver



16.1
megapixels
8.0 fps

**OM-D E-M10
From £499**

OM-D E-M10 Body	£499
OM-D E-M10 + 14-42mm EZ	£659
E-P5 Body	£599
E-P5 + 14-42mm	£699
E-P5 + 17mm	£1049
+ VF-4 EVF	£349
E-PL5 + 14-42mm	£459

FUJIFILM

X-T1



16.3
megapixels
8.0 fps

**X-T1
From £949**

X-T1 Body	£849 inc C/Back*
Price you pay today	£949
X-T1 + 18-55mm	£1199 inc. C/Back*
Price you pay today	£1299
X-E2 Body	£459 inc. C/Back*
Price you pay today	£559
X-E2 + 18-55mm	£729 inc. C/Back*
Price you pay today	£829
X-M1 Body	£349
X-M1 + 16-50mm	£389
X-Pro 1 Body	£799

Fujifilm Cashback* ends 11.01.15

SONY

A7S



12.0
megapixels
5.0 fps
4k Video

**NEW A7S
Body £2099**

A7 Body	£1159
A7 + 28-70mm	£1299
A7R Body	£1511
A6000 Body Black or Silver	£499 including £50 Cashback*
Price you pay today	£549
A6000 + 16-50mm Power Zoom	£549 including £50 Cashback*
Price you pay today	£599

A77 II



24.3
megapixels
12.0 fps
1080p
movie mode

**NEW A77 II
Body £930**

A77 II + 16-50mm	£1399
A58	From £339
A99	From £799
Sony A-Mount Lenses:	
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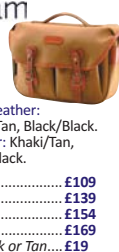
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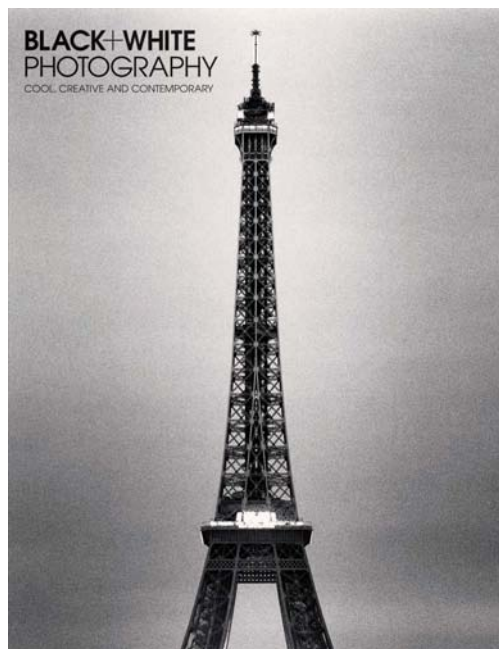
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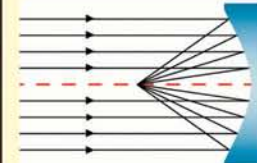
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Birds of Prey Workshop, Bedford £99

April 25th, 26th; Private flying displays on pre-determined flightpath helps you to focus on birds in flight. Excellent opportunities with carefully chosen backgrounds. Also static shots in outstanding wooded locations. Jesses carefully hidden. This location boasts one of the largest collections of Birds of Prey in the UK. White tailed Sea Eagle, Bald Eagles, Hawks, Owls, Falcons, Kestrels, Buzzards and Long Eared Owl (new).

Foxes, Otters, Wildcats, Badgers & more, Surrey. £139

July 6th, 7th, 8th; Inside enclosures 'til sunset. Also Owls, Snakes, Badgers, Polecats, Weasels, Hedgehog, Harvest Mice & various Deer. This is possibly Englands longest established photographic venue. 2 sessions with the foxes, sometimes only inches away from you. Time is spent inside encloses with Foxes, Otters & Scottish Wildcats. Badgers GUARANTEED. No fences or wires to shoot through for any subject today.

Small Cats Workshop, Welwyn, Herts. £99

April 22,23 24; Privileged access to Snow Leopards, Amur Leopards, Pumas, Caracal, Leopard Cat, Lynx, Servals, Golden Cat. As featured on recent series of TV programs on Animal Planet. Small groups. Tuition

Bass Rock Gannets £179

June 5, 7, 11, 18, 21st; Private boat. Exclusive use of island for just 10 photographers. 50,000 pairs of nesting gannets on one small island. 4.5 hours photography. Amazing close-ups & fantastic flight shots. Large crate of fish fed to gannets as they dive into the sea. An amazing sight that you will never forget.

Gannets diving off Bass Rock £99

June 19th; Fantastic new workshop for 2014. We sail round Bass Rock without landing on the island. A whole hour of throwing fish into the sea for the Gannets to catch. Amazing diving shots. 1,000 + dives. Tuition.

Farne Islands Puffins (Over 5 hrs photography) £89

June 6th, 10th, 17th, 20th; 20 species of birds. 50,000 puffins. Guillemots, Razorbills, Shag, Arctic Tern colony etc. You will get unbelievably close to some of the species. Get that much sought after shot of Puffins with their beaks crammed full of sand eels. Tips and Tuition. Approximately 5 hours photography.

Pro Birds of Prey Shoot, Bamburgh, Northumberland. £139

June 13th, 14th; Amazing photography opportunities. Hill top views overlooking large extensive valleys and seascapes. Rocks and gorse bushes abound. Golden Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Snowy Owl, Eagle Owl and Barn Owl will be placed in really natural situations. Jesses will be hidden where possible for those perfect "in the wild" shots. Can combine with Bass/Farne as this location is very close to the Farne Islands.

Pro Birds of Prey Shoot (2), Bamburgh, Northumberland. £139

June 4th, 8th, 12th, 16th; New venue. Both the falconer and the birds are different to workshop above. Venues are about 20 miles apart. We will take two of the birds down to an amazingly beautiful, little known waterfall. This will provide a unique backdrop for your subjects. The falls are surrounded by trees covered with mosses and lichens. We will photograph up to 10 different species, mainly British. Maximum 8 photographers.



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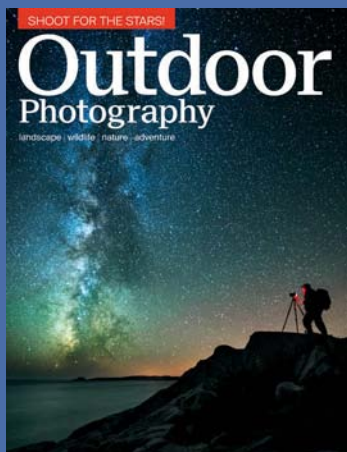


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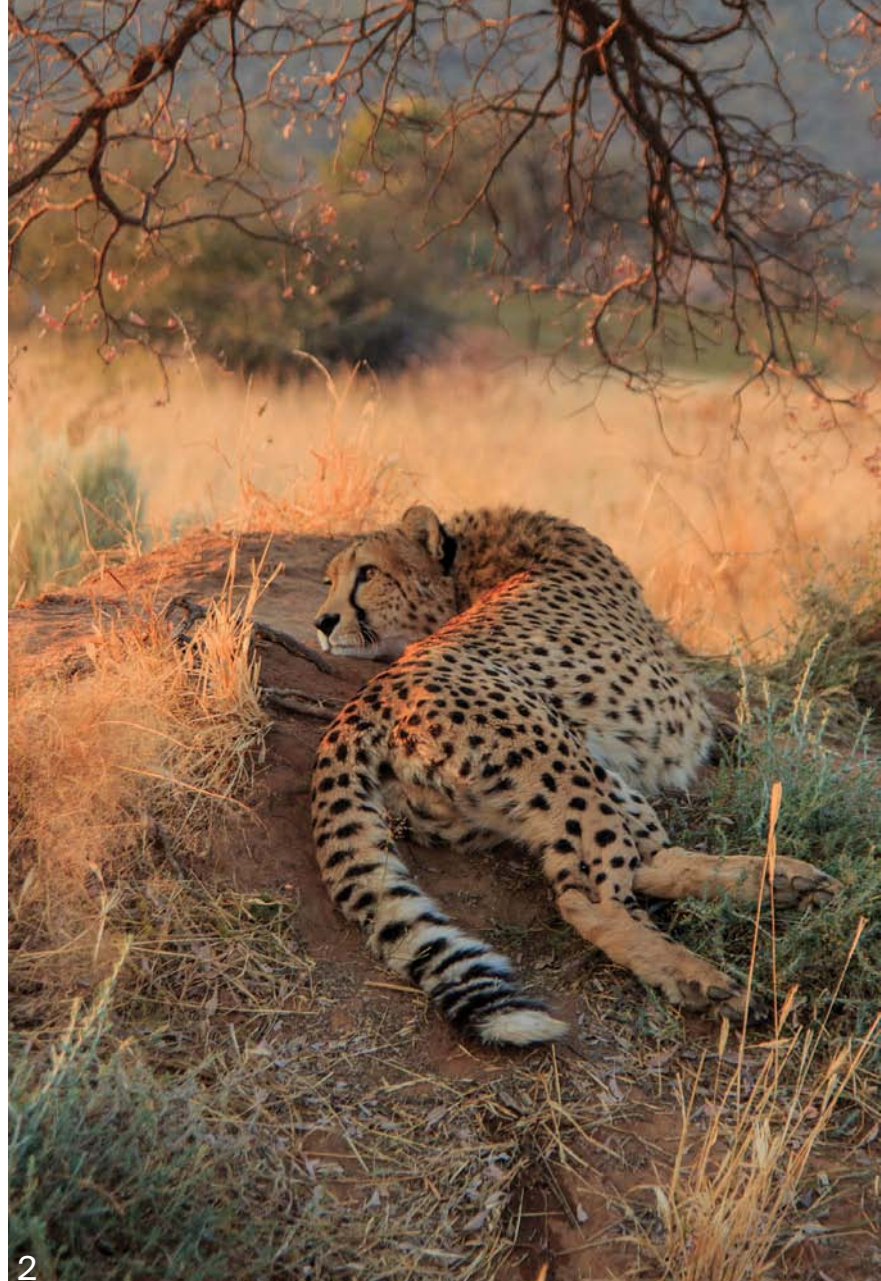




IF YOU ONLY DO ONE THING THIS MONTH...

Wildlife behaviour

In our September issue we challenged you to capture compelling aspects of animal behaviour, and we received a high number of extremely impressive images. It was tough to judge but we finally settled on our winner – see above – and 13 runners-up >



WINNER (PREVIOUS PAGE)

1/ Kerry Duncan

I had been following the progress of this barn owl as it hunted along a cliff-top field, when a passing kestrel dove in to attempt to steal the field mouse it was carrying. The birds ended up dropping their prey, but I was lucky enough to be able to capture the moment. I used a slow shutter speed to give the image the sense of movement and drama it deserved.

Sony A580 with Sony 75-300mm lens at 300mm, ISO 800, 1/50sec at f/5.6, handheld
kerryduncanphotography.co.uk

2/ Kasia Nowak

The image was taken in Bushy Park, London, at Heron Pond, which was dug for the new pastime of fishing during Oliver Cromwell's time at Hampton Court Palace. I was taking photos of a Canada goose silhouetted against the rising sun when it suddenly spread its wings. *Nikon D800 with Nikkor 70-300mm VR lens at 200mm, ISO 100, 1/800sec at f/8*
kasianowak.com

3/ Alan Smith

This photograph of a young cheetah was taken on a visit to the Africat Foundation in the Okonjima Game Reserve, Namibia. I particularly liked the soulful way it was gazing towards the setting sun. All the more soulful, perhaps, as it was being held in a six-hectare pen in preparation for its release into the main reserve. The foundation rescues cats that have been causing a nuisance on cattle farms, to prevent them from being killed, and educates farmers about how cattle and wildlife can co-exist. *Canon EOS 70D with Tamron 28-300mm XRDi lens at 119mm, ISO 800, 1/250sec at f/5.6, handheld*
safarious.com/en/profiles/10164

4/ Janet Miles

The Hebridean island of Islay plays host to large numbers of geese over winter. I wanted to give my image a more impressionistic feel, so I used a slow shutter speed. *Nikon D800 with Nikon 70-200mm VR II lens with 1.7x teleconverter at 210mm, ISO 100, 1/20sec at f/36, handheld*
flickr.com/photos/softleyj

5/ Steve Horsted

This is an image of female eider ducks feeding in the waves, which I took during a trip to eastern Iceland. *Nikon D3 with Nikkor 600mm f/4 ED VR AFS lens, ISO 800, 1/2000sec at f/6.7, tripod*
stevehorstedphotography.com

6/ Ruth Asher

I had always wanted to see polar bears in their natural habitat, so I decided to take a trip to Spitsbergen, Norway. Sometimes these trips come to an end without a single bear sighting, and so you can imagine my excitement when we were told that a whale carcass had been located and was attracting lots of bears down to the water's edge to feed. *Nikon D90 with Sigma 70-300mm f/4-5.6 macro DG lens at 300mm, ISO 200, 1/640sec at f/9*
ruthasherphotography.co.uk

7/ Chris Speller

This shot of an apparently angelic gull was taken on a lovely breezy summer evening at Bedruthan Steps in Cornwall. I love the challenge of taking



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photographs of birds in flight, and conditions were perfect; a colony of gulls was nesting on the cliffs, lots of young birds were honing their flying skills, and there was a strong onshore wind. So I lay on the cliff top and had some fun. *Nikon D700 with Nikon 70-200mm f/2.8 VR lens with Nikon 1.4x teleconverter at 105mm, ISO 200, 1/2500sec at f/6.3, handheld*

7/ Georgina Strange

A curious grass wren, showing off his balancing skills on a stand of sand grass on New Island in the Falkland Islands. I was on my way to photograph southern sea lions hunting

penguins, but this little wren caught my attention as I passed, flitting between the blades of sand grass. Occasionally he'd pop up for a look at me – striking this pose several times. *Canon EOS 5D MkIII with Canon 200mm f/2.8 L lens, ISO 250, 1/4000sec at f/4*
newislandtrust.com/designinnature.com

8/ Ric Harding

Although I was lucky to see several polar bears close up during a trip to photograph in Svalbard, I think that this image of a more distant polar bear provides a more poignant interpretation of the Arctic wilderness and the uncertain

future faced by its most iconic inhabitant. *Nikon D800 with Nikkor 80-400mm VR lens at 165mm, ISO 800, 1/2500sec at f/10, handheld*

9/ Jonathan Cross

On a glorious June day I spent an amazing five hours on Bass Rock in the Firth of Forth among the huge gannet colony. This image appealed, as I was lucky to catch a moment that resembled a *pas de deux*, with the *corps de ballet* behind. Gliding in the air, these birds are magnificent. *Canon EOS 5D MkIII with Canon 70-200mm f/4 L IS lens at 93mm, ISO 800, 1/8000sec at f/8, handheld*



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10/ Richard Garvey-Williams

This was taken in the Serengeti National Park, Tanzania. During the dry season the hippos often gather in large numbers in the shrinking river pools. Tempers tend to flare due to their forced proximity.

Canon EOS 5D with EF 500mm f/4 lens with 1.4x teleconverter, ISO 200, 1/320sec at f/8, tripod richardgarveywilliams.com

11/ Ian Cook

Newcastle-upon-Tyne has what is thought to be the largest inland colony of kittiwakes in the

world. These kittiwakes had nested on the Tyne Bridge parapet adjacent to the road, and were only just visible through a gap in the fence.

Canon IXUS 95IS with 37mm lens (35mm equivalent), ISO 80, 1/100sec at f/8, handheld iancook57.wix.com/icwp

12/ John Barlow

In early March, the winter gang of long-tailed tits that regularly visit my garden had started to split up and pair off. Close encounters between the birds near my feeding station produced short moments of aggression. Keeping

their long tails in the frame proved a challenge.

Canon EOS 7D with Canon EF 300mm f/2.8 L IS USM lens, ISO 1000, 1/2500sec at f/5, tripod jrbarlow.co.uk

13/ Craig Denford

I went to Skomer island specifically to photograph the puffins. It was wonderful to see how affectionate they were with each other when they returned to land after being out at sea.

Canon EOS 7D with 400mm f/5.6 lens, ISO 640, 1/250sec at f/8, tripod craigdenfordphotography.co.uk

YOUR NEXT CHALLENGE

ASTROPHOTOGRAPHY LANDSCAPES

This month we're inviting you to send us your very best astro landscape photographs – whether you're a seasoned astrophotographer or completely new to night-time shooting.

The hours between sunset and sunrise offer endless opportunities to capture incredible, otherworldly scenes – from twilight vistas and moonlit landscapes to star trails and meteor showers. In the right conditions, it's even possible to photograph the Milky Way, and you don't need specialist gear to get started. Check out Dan Santillo's guide on page 28, and then send us your best shots!



Enter and you could win two superb Aquapac products, together worth £115!

If you are chosen as the winner of our 'astrophotography landscapes' competition, your image will be published in the April 2015 issue of *OP* and you will receive two great prizes from Aquapac: a 40L Upano Waterproof Duffel, worth £100, and a Small Stormproof Pouch, worth £15. Designed for transporting bulky loads in wet places, the lightweight but tough 40L Upano Waterproof Duffel will protect your gear, whatever the weather. The Small Stormproof Pouch is made from TPU-coated ripstop nylon, with welded seams and a three-roll seal with buckle. To find out more, go to aquapac.net.

Closing date for entries is 12 January 2015.

See page 80 for an entry form and our terms and conditions.





Where in the world?

If you can name this incredible rock formation, which rises to over 600 metres, you will be in with a chance of winning a pair of Keen Revel II boots, worth £135!

Where is it?

The image shows a spectacular rock formation with a breathtaking view. But is it:

- a) **Hanging Rock, Australia**
- b) **Sierras de Córdoba, Argentina**
- c) **Pulpit Rock, Norway**

The correct answer and the winner's name will be published in OP189 (on sale 12 February 2015). Send your answer to opcomp@thegmcgroup.com, stating 'Rock with a view' as the subject, or drop it in the post to: Where in the world - 'Rock with a view', OP, 86 High Street, Lewes, East Sussex, BN7 1XN.

Deadline for entry is midnight on 7 January 2015.

THIS MONTH'S SUPERB PRIZE

A pair of Keen Revel II winter boots

This month's winner will receive a pair of Keen's Revel II boots, which are ideal for keeping feet protected during outdoor winter adventures.

Available in both men's and women's size, the Revel II features Keen's Heat Trapulator - a three-layer sandwich system that reflects heat back into the foot while keeping the biting cold out. Constructed with a water-resistant nubuck leather upper for durability, a supportive moulded rubber Shellback heel and a Climate Rubber outsole, which hardens in cold weather to give ultimate traction on icy terrain, these boots are a great piece of outdoor kit in challenging conditions.

WORTH
£135!



To find out more go to keenfootwear.com

AUTUMN ISSUE WINNER

In OP183 we asked you to name the dramatically situated lighthouse featured in the photograph. The correct answer is:

- a) **Lime Kiln, USA**



The winner of the SmartWool PhD SmartLoft Divide Full Zip Jacket is Sandra Holmes from Hull. Congratulations, your prize is on its way!



I began my OCA studies in 2010 intending originally to take just one or two courses to broaden my photographic horizons but I am now fully committed to the degree pathway. I was looking for a course that went beyond the "how-to" elements of photography but explored the historical and contextual underpinnings of the art. The OCA course structure offers a broader range of subject matter than others and the modular approach meant that I could work the studies into my life rather than have to make my life fit the needs of the course.

Dave Whenham
Photographer

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